

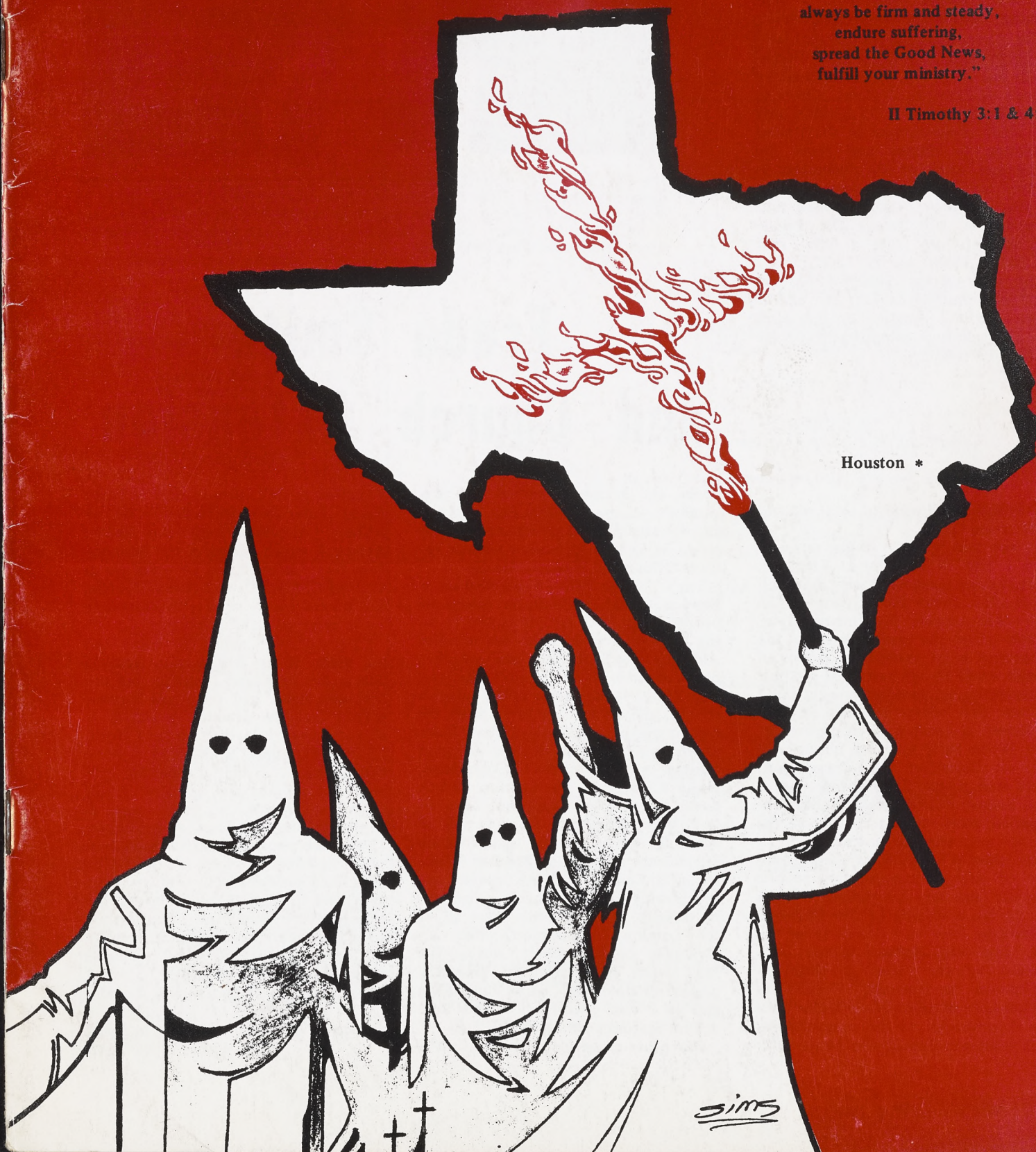
IN UNITY

APRIL/MAY 1978

.75 DONATION

"But understand this:
That in the latter days
there will come
times of trouble . . .
. . . As for you,
always be firm and steady,
endure suffering,
spread the Good News,
fulfill your ministry."

II Timothy 3:1 & 4:5



The Reverend Elder Freda Smith is the Executive Secretary of the Office of World Church Extension of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. This means that in addition to her extensive work as an Elder of the Fellowship, and her responsibilities as the pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Sacramento, California, she has general oversight of the expansion of Fellowship ministry wherever that work is progressing outside of the United States.

The first Fellowship congregation to be established outside of the United States was the Metropolitan Community Church of London, England. Recently, Elder Smith visited MCC London, and the other congregations in the United Kingdom, to discuss and share the hopes and needs of the Fellowship in Britain and Western Europe. (Please see the complete report of this visit elsewhere in this issue.) The following excerpts are from a letter sent by Elder Smith to IN UNITY. She shares with us her feelings about her visit, and testifies about her excitement over the progress of the work and the spiritual commitment of the people in England. †



The Rev. Jo McVey Abbott, Worship Coordinator of MCC Birmingham, United Kingdom; The Rev. Elder Freda Smith, Executive Secretary for the Office of World Church Extension; and the Rev. Jose von Buhler, Worship Coordinator of MCC Thames Valley, United Kingdom, and Church Extension Officer for Great Britain and Western Europe.

Freda Smith and Church Extension

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As you may know, I've just returned from a trip to the United Kingdom. There is a real need for sharing news and information about the ministry of the Fellowship outside the United States to help offset the assumption that the Fellowship is an exclusively American church. I will do my best to do my part in supplying international news, and I am sure that others will help as well!

I arrived in London, at Heathrow Airport, in the early morning, about 6:00 AM, on December 4th. Praise God! There were people there to meet me! A good number of the Thames Valley congregation were waiting for me at the gate as I went through customs.

Our Thames Valley Study Group consists of many extraordinary people. They are also very determined to have, and to be, a church of the Universal Fellowship. Jose von Buhler [now the Rev. Jose von Buhler, having been licensed by the Elders at Ministers' Conference in Portland, Oregon in late January of this year.] is the Worship Coordinator of the congregation; he is a former Benedictine monk from

Spain, and is now employed as a psychologist in the London area. He is a gifted preacher and administrator, and serves as Church Extension Officer for Great Britain and Western Europe.

From Thames Valley I travelled on to London. What a fantastic group of people there! MCC people appear to be the same the world over—ten minutes with any group of them, and you feel like a member of the family! The Rev. Ken Taylor is the pastor of the London church, and he and his lover made me feel instantly at home. [Since Elder Smith's visit, Rev. Taylor has accepted the call as pastor of MCC Greensboro, North Carolina.] The London church meets for morning worship in Toynbee Hall, where Karl Marx did quite a bit of speaking over a century ago. Evening services are held at the Pemlico Neighborhood Center, and the services are overflowing the hall there! I had opportunities to meet with most all of the London congregation, either individually or collectively, during the next week as I attended meetings, prayer groups, and social functions, and as I was guided about the sites of that centuries old city.

Our other congregation in the United

Kingdom is MCC Birmingham, a Study Group under the direction of Jo McVey Abbott, [Also now the Rev. Jo McVey Abbott,] which meets at the Birmingham Gay Centre. I met Jo years ago at General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and he and his lover were wonderful to me in every way during my stay.

I learned much about the hopes and the needs of the British congregations during my visit, and I know from my correspondence and telephone conversations that the situation is similar in all the areas where the Office of World Church Extension is involved. I hope that everyone in our Fellowship will help and support the needs of World Church Extension, in prayer, and, if at all possible, with financial assistance. The fields are truly "white unto harvest," and the "workers are few." The sisters and brothers in the United Kingdom, and in many other countries, are working very hard, and often against great opposition, to spread the message of God's love and care for all people as preached by this Fellowship . . . they deserve all the help we can provide!

Yours in Christ
(Rev. Elder) Freda Smith



In this Issue:

VOLUMN VIII — NUMBER 2

APRIL 1978

PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Liaison Elder
The Rev. Troy D. Perry

Director
The Rev. Larry Bernier

IN UNITY

Editor
The Rev. Larry Bernier

Associate Editor
Ms. Karen Davis

Editorial Assistants
Ms. Donna Wade
Ms. Candace Halby

Staff Artist
Mr. Daniel Sims

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

Editor
The Rev. F. Jay Deacon

Art Director
Ms. Jean Gralley

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ELDER'S MESSAGE

2 — On World Church Extension

Rev. Elder Freda Smith

EDITORIAL COMMENT

4 — Three Mountains

Rev. Laurence G. Bernier

5 — LETTERS

FEATURES

6 — Harrassment in Houston

Donna Wade

8 — Pastor? The Church is on Fire!

Karen Davis

12 — MCC Fresno: A Witness in the Community
*Reprinted from an interview
in Pace magazine, Fresno, California*

Mark Hedlund

15 — "One in the Spirit"

Rev. Jo McVey Abbott

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION

19 — Presbyterians on Homosexuality

DEBORAH'S SONG

20 — What is Sexism?

Rev. Rhea Miller

21 — MCC Montreal, Canada & Rev. Jo Anne Monti

THOUGHTS and TESTIMONIES

22 — The Gay Christian and the Church

Dennis Moore

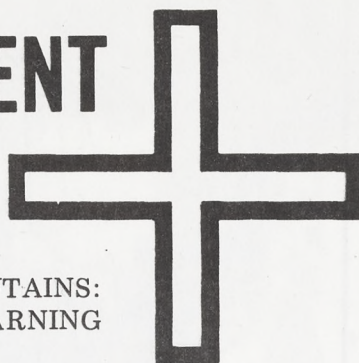
24 — THE FELLOWSHIP FAMILY

27 — POSTSCRIPT

The Gay Christian does not appear in this issue of IN UNITY because of technical problems at the east coast office. It will return with the June issue featuring a special article by Boston, Massachusetts pastor Ed Hougan.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

by the Rev. Laurence G. Bernier



THREE MOUNTAINS: A LESSON, AND A WARNING

We know the story of Moses as it is recorded in Scripture, how he was spared death when Pharaoh decreed that all male Israelite children should be destroyed, how he was saved by Pharaoh's own daughter and raised in the royal household, and how he was called by God and cast his lot with God's people to lead them out of slavery in Egypt and into freedom in the promised land.

This account of Moses and the Exodus is a moving and powerful testimony of a loving God leading a loved people from oppression and bondage to freedom, and it is *more* than that, it is a living lesson for God's people today, a lesson — and a warning.

Moses was called by God, and he was so faithful to his call that God did not speak to him in the usual manner of revelation, through dark and cloudy speeches, but mouth to mouth and face to face. (Numbers 12:7-8). Three of Moses' encounters with God took place on mountains, and it is in these mountain-top experiences that we must look for insight into what a loving God is doing to lead a loved people out of oppression and bondage in this age.

The first mountain is an unnamed mountain in the Horeb range, it is the Mountain of Intercession. Moses had led God's people out of Egypt. They had crossed the Red Sea and were at a place called Rephidim when they were attacked by a fierce native tribe called the Amalekites. This was a critical time for the Israelites, they had become used to travelling in the desert by this time, but they had not yet had to fight for their freedom. While Joshua made preparations for battle, Moses went with Aaron and Hur to a mountain overlooking the plain below. There Moses lifted up his rod toward heaven — the same rod which had been held aloft when God sent the plagues to ravage

Egypt, and the same rod which had smashed the rock when God provided water for the thirsty people — and as long as Moses held this rod aloft; as long as he held up this symbol of God's power and presence, the Israelites won their battles against the Amalekites!

But Moses was an old man, and the battle was fierce and after many hours Moses grew weary and had to lower the rod. When the symbol came down the Amalekites began to win over the Israelites. Aaron and Hur saw what was happening and stationed themselves on each side of Moses and held up his arms while he held up the rod, and with the symbol of God's presence over them the Israelites defeated the Amalekites and won the victory.

So at this unnamed mountain near Mount Horeb God interceded on behalf of the people to save them from enemy attack. God helped the people in their need, and they moved on toward freedom with new strength and confidence.

The second Mountain is also in the Horeb range. It is Mount Sinai — the Mountain of Revelation. There, while the earth quaked, lightening flashed, thunder rolled and the heights of the mountain were wrapped in smoke, God gave Moses the Law.

It was this great revelation of God that made the people into a Covenant People, and bound them in a sacred relationship to their God. It was this great revelation that set these people apart from all the other peoples of the world. It was this great revelation that would make freedom worth having for the Israelites, for in the moral precepts of the Law they found the difference between true freedom and anarchy — between moral responsibility and selfish ambition.

So at Sinai God revealed to the

people what their future freedom would be like, and how they would live when they entered the promised land. God showed the people their destiny, and having seen the plans for a God-ordered society, the people found a new purpose in their lives.

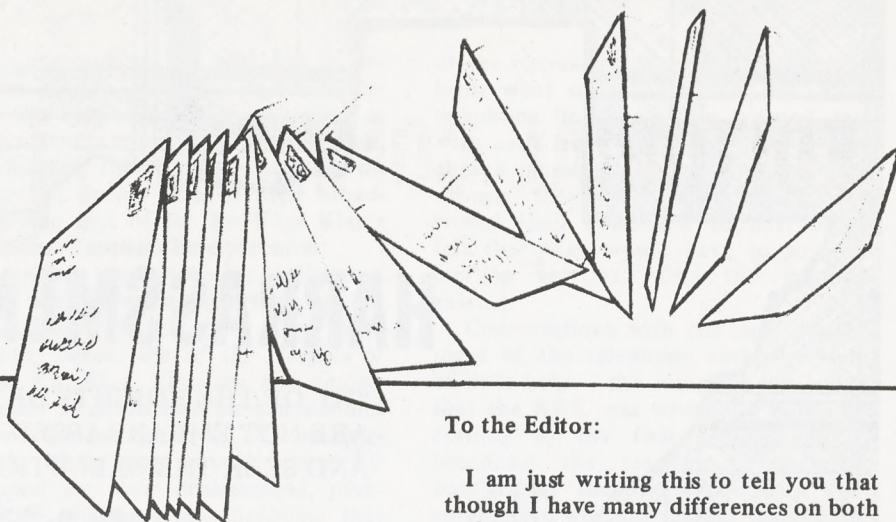
The third mountain is in the Pisgah range: It is Mount Nebo — the Mountain of Disappointment. Moses had led the people through forty years of wandering in the desert and brought them to the border of the promised land. The mission for which God had called him was accomplished, and the people were about to realize their greatest hopes — but Moses was not to be with them. Because he had transgressed and failed to sanctify God in the eyes of the people when they rebelled against God, Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land with them.

God told Moses to climb to the top of Mount Nebo where he was to die and be gathered to his own people. So Moses climbed the mountain and looked out from its height. He saw the twelve tribes gathered on the plain below with the Ark of the Covenant in their midst and their standards waving in the breeze. He saw the mountains in the distance and the sea of Galilee, and he saw the place where one day the great city of Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah would stand. He saw spread out before him the whole land of promise, and he knew it was not for him to enter it, for God had said, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not cross over into it." And so with his task finished and the promised land clear in his sight, "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord."

Three mountains. A Mountain of Intercession where God stepped in and

Please turn to page 18

LETTERS



Dear Friends:

I have occasion to read IN UNITY, and I noted that your October issue indicates the possibility of discontinuance. I simply want to say how sorry I would be if that is the case.

While I have great difficulty with the whole concept of a separate church for gay people (as I do for all black people or all university graduates or all Gray Panthers or all Asians etc.), I do find your journal to be an extremely helpful one in the entire ecumenical arena. It is well designed; the pictures are extremely effective in sharing something of your life; its news items are interesting, and I am not aware of any other church journal which covers them as you do.

However, the most valuable part of the journal is the thoughtful articles and essays. Many of them are in the area of sexuality, and churches such as I represent desperately need this kind of stimulation. . . . Now I realize that the issue is whether the "journal" will be separate from the magazine. I simply want to say that including both together helps all — I would hope that people who read it for the news coverage will also be stimulated by the theological reflection; equally, for persons such as myself who are interested in the reflection, it is very helpful to be exposed to the other articles as well. If the two are separated, I might never be exposed to the additional reporting about life in the M.C.C. community and in the gay world.

So — count my vote in on continuance as is! And many thanks for your fine work.

Sincerely yours,
(Rev. Ms.) Jeanne Audrey Powers
Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

To the Editor:

IN UNITY is the best evangelical tool this Fellowship produces. We would all be the poorer if it were discontinued. I think it is a great pity that it can not come out with more regularity.

Most of my time in the Fellowship has been spent a long way from Los Angeles. Whether as Coordinator of World Church Extension in Great Britain, or now, as District Coordinator of the South Atlantic District, I often feel quite distant from my brothers and sisters simply because I don't know what is going on in the UFMCC. Now if I feel this way, what must the average member in my jurisdiction feel?

With General Conference every other year we are going to have to strengthen our means of communication. District conferences twice a year will not be the answer. We need IN UNITY and we need it regularly. God bless you.

In Christ's love
(The Rev.) Thomas S. Bigelow
District Coordinator
South Atlantic District

To the Editor:

I am just writing this to tell you that though I have many differences on both a doctrinal and a moral level with the UFMCC I thoroughly enjoy my subscription to IN UNITY and hope that, if anything, it shall be expanded. Articles such as Ralph Blair's on "Therapeutic Hocus Pocus and Homosexuality" are of a very important nature not just for gay Christians, but for all people, and are very scarce to come by. Likewise, as one of your readers, the Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey, points out in a letter in the last issue, there are very few publications that a gay Christian would want in his/her home which have an affirmative gay position. Indeed, I have just recently had to cancel my subscription to [a local MCC church newsletter] precisely because it carried an ad for a "bath" house.

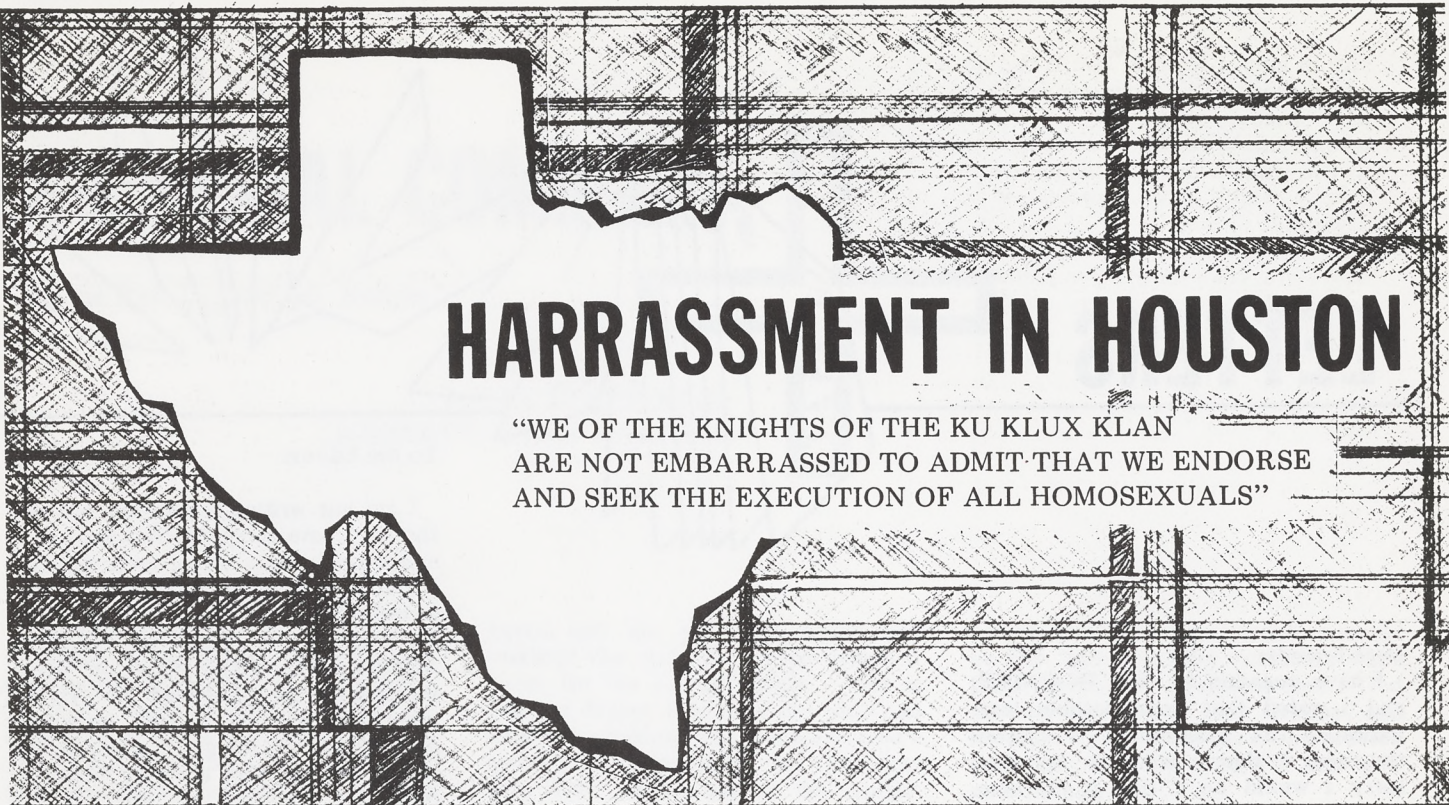
You fulfill an important role in the gay and the Christian world and I wish you every possible success.

In Christ's service,
(The Rev.) Frederick L. Hirshman
Jamaica, New York

To the Editor:

I just want to drop you a line to tell you that I do appreciate IN UNITY very much, and would not like to see it discontinued. I enjoy the features and especially the news, and I like being reminded of the size of the Fellowship family, and of its unity. I also like the present format, as it incorporates the news of MCC and the theological side in the same issue. I hope IN UNITY will be continued.

Jay Allen Kelderman
Raleigh, North Carolina



HARRASSMENT IN HOUSTON

"WE OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN
ARE NOT EMBARRASSED TO ADMIT THAT WE ENDORSE
AND SEEK THE EXECUTION OF ALL HOMOSEXUALS"

by Donna Wade

In the past the Ku Klux Klan has been known to tar and feather black people and send them running in flames through the streets of the towns where they lived. They have been known to lynch innocent blacks to assert the Klan's belief in the superiority of the white race. The Klan has sown the seeds of hatred and prejudice throughout the decades, preaching fear, bigotry and discrimination against the Jews, Catholics, all non-white peoples, and against anyone who does not subscribe to their narrow-minded views, and each time — as a prelude to their more violent actions — the Ku Klux Klan has burned crosses on the lawns of their intended victims.

For most people the mention of the Ku Klux Klan brings to mind the Civil War period when the Klan was most visible and active. But the KKK is still spreading its doctrines of violence and supremacy, even though the instances of physical brutality have diminished. Lately, this organization has begun to direct its hate and malice toward the churches of the Universal Fellowship.

To the members and Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection in Houston, Texas, the Ku Klux Klan has become a painful reality. On Friday, January 6, 1978, when Pastor Jeri Ann Harvey arrived at the church building, she discovered that the KKK had burned a cross in

front of the church the previous night. The local police were immediately summoned, but instead of dispatching a police car to the church, they merely made a report of the incident from the information gathered from the telephone conversation with Rev. Harvey. Regarding the cross burning, Rev. Harvey commented:

"We were, needless to say, concerned about the incident. But a major portion of our concern was that none of our neighbors around the church saw fit to call the authorities, or involve themselves in any way with extinguishing the flames. Our neighbors have never been terribly delighted with our presence here, however, this general apathy pointed out even more to us that in the event the church were firebombed, it would probably be allowed to burn to the ground."

On Saturday, January 7, Rev. Harvey began receiving a series of obscene and threatening telephone calls at her home in Galena Park, Texas. (Rev. Harvey's unpublished phone number had been changed only three weeks before.) The initial call informed her that they "knew she was a queer", and that "all she needed was a good [intercourse with a man]", and that they would see to it that this happened to her later that night. Fortunately, Rev. Harvey had no visitors that night, but if the caller was trying to instill fear in her, he accomplished his pur-

pose.

Rev. Harvey had been advised by members of the congregation who had previously been employed by the telephone company that pretending to have the phone line traced often frightened away harassing callers. On one of the calls Rev. Harvey followed this advice, but the caller immediately called back and said, "that won't work queer. I work for the phone company and nothing you do will keep us from you."

A Human Rights Rally was scheduled for Monday, January 9, in protest to Anita Bryant's appearance in Houston, and despite the bitter cold, there was remarkably good attendance on the steps of Houston City Hall that night. Rev. Harvey was one of the first speakers for the rally, and her comments were aired on the news programs of the most conservative television and radio stations in Houston, as well as receiving national media coverage. She told her listeners that:

"Scripture teaches us that the Bible is a two-edged sword, and I think it's time our adversaries began to feel the cut of that sword.

"Scripture tells me that God is incapable of making a mistake. God made me a woman, and that was no mistake. God made me a lesbian, and that was no mistake. And God made me a free-willed person that I might come to know and accept Jesus Christ as my

"THE LAW OF GOD STATES
THE DEATH PENALTY
FOR HOMOSEXUALS
AND WHEN GOD'S LAWS
ARE AGAIN ENFORCED,
THE DEATH PENALTY
IS WHAT IT WILL BE"

Ku Klux Klan telephone message

personal Savior, and that was no mistake.

"Throughout the years they have firebombed our churches, beaten us in alleys, and tried every purge they could think of to get rid of us. But here we are in 1978 on the steps of City Hall, and we'll continue to be here. I would remind you that 2000 years ago they crucified Christ and thought 'that's the end of that', but I stand before you tonight to tell you that Christ is alive and well — I know! And his message to you is that he loves you. And so do I."

After the rally the church was flooded with encouraging telephone calls from persons who were touched by Rev. Harvey's message. The majority of the callers pledged their support and stated that they had been hungering for the knowledge that God really does care about them. Excitement ebullient in the Houston church over the newfound interest and enthusiasm — for a while.

Then on Tuesday, January 10, Rev. Harvey received a frantic telephone call from a member of her congregation: "For God's sake, call this number and listen to what the Ku Klux Klan has put on their recorded phone message."

The fundamentalist radio stations in Houston were broadcasting the KKK telephone number in their hourly news programs and instructing people to call the number to hear "the Ku Klux

Klan's response to the problems of the Human Rights Rally." Television stations also carried the Klan's response as a news item, airing pictures of the Klan, and flashing the telephone number on the screen during each of their broadcasts. The text of the Ku Klux Klan's "Response" appears here verbatim:

A public announcement authorized by the state headquarters of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Pasadena, Texas: We of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are not embarrassed to admit that we endorse and seek the execution of all homosexuals. While many church people are duped by their brainwashed, pink-panty preachers into believing that we should merely pray for the homosexuals, we find that we must endorse and support the law of God which calls for the death penalty for all homosexuals. Not only have we seen the establishment of homosexual churches, like the Metropolitan Church at 1214 JoAnnie Street in Houston, in our once unblemished land, but at least two major denominations have actually ordained homosexuals into the ministry. To endorse the homosexual, as having any rights to set up anywhere in our land, we invoke the wrath of God as at Sodom and Gomorrah. God's law on homosexuality states at Leviticus 18:22, "And you must not lay down with a male the same as you lay down with a woman, it is a detestable thing." Also at Leviticus 20:13, "And when a man lies down with a male the same as one lies down with a woman, both of them have done a detestable thing. They should be put to death without fail. Their own blood is upon them."

It is not our intention to put this up to a discussion, or debate the matter, or to set up a dialogue with a committee of queers as to their rights or sexual freedoms. The law of God states the death penalty for homosexuals and when God's laws are again enforced, the death penalty is what it will be. On January 9, on the very steps of city hall in downtown Houston, there was a meeting of homosexuals to talk about their rights and sexual freedoms. How long will it be before the people of this land stand up for God and say "No more of this!" Must Houston, Texas become the next Sodom and Gomorrah? Preceding announcement made possible by the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights.

Telephone lines to the Ku Klux Klan headquarters jammed because of the large numbers of people who heard

of the response and were attempting to learn what the Klan had to say. MCC telephone lines were also jammed, but with calls from frightened and worried church members, some of whom, even though they loved the church and vowed their continued support of it, felt that they would have to stop attending services while the troubles existed.

Conversations with the legal department of the telephone company were of little help — the company contended that the KKK was within its rights according to the first amendment to broadcast the message. Only after bombarding the phone company with complaints was any action taken. The Klan continued their malicious message,

but as of January 13, had been forced to delete the name and address of MCC of the Resurrection. The demand for the death penalty had also been stricken from the recording.

The KKK phone message only added to the existing tension surrounding the church in Houston. The police, although gradually becoming more sympathetic, could only double the number of patrol cars assigned to the area. Members of the Arson Squad informed Rev. Harvey that the church is in a neighborhood where many gay businesses have already been the victims of arson — an area targeted by groups such as the Klan. One gay business had just recently been firebombed, and the officers told Rev. Harvey that even if the church were also to be burned, the amount of proof required to show KKK responsibility would be almost impossible to obtain.

The atmosphere around MCC of the Resurrection has calmed somewhat by this time. Fear and apprehension still pervade the community, and weekly attendance at church services and functions has suffered because of this. Church records and irreplaceable items have been relocated to a safer place than the church building. The Klan has been amazingly quiet, and as a police officer stated to Rev. Harvey, "I would rather they'd go ahead and do what they're going to, instead of being this quiet." But out of the fear, the frustration and the anger has emerged a renewed trust in God, and a stronger, Spirit-filled commitment on the part of many in the Houston church. As Rev. Harvey commented:

"The victory of the Klan has been to keep some of our people from church, but our enthusiasm is stronger, and nothing will keep this church from preaching God's word . . . we must be doing something right to make Satan this angry." †

Pastor? The Church is on Fire!

Karen Davis is a professional journalist working in the Los Angeles area, and is the Associate Editor of IN UNITY magazine

by Karen Davis

*I will lead them into the fire
and refine them as silver is refined,
test them as gold is tested.
They will call on my name
and I shall listen;
and I shall say: These are my people;
and each shall say: Jehovah is my God!*

Zechariah 13:9

Fire does more than literally purifying silver and gold, and symbolically purifying the human psyche: it also burns down buildings.

Church buildings, in some cases.

And in the case of our Fellowship, church buildings have been burning down with "unexplained" and alarming frequency.

With a total of 121 congregations, in the short space of five years 12 congregations have had their buildings either seriously vandalized, or totally destroyed by fire — ten percent of our buildings — one tenth, a tithe: the portion given back to God.

And the costs in property, as heavy as they have been, are insignificant when compared to the cost in human lives: in one of these fires eleven church members and their pastor died in the flames.

Is this only coincidence, or is our society on some sort of a "purging" mission? And if so, what will happen if our Fellowship doesn't ultimately take the hint and "get out of town by sundown"?

The following is a brief accounting of some of the disturbing, suspiciously "coincidental" fires which have destroyed Fellowship church buildings in recent years. It is based on records gathered from a variety of sources, and maintained in the Fellowship's files:



Times-Picayune Photo by G. E. Arnold

**JANUARY 27, 1973:
MCC LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

An "intentional fire of suspicious origin" was the official conclusion for this fire which destroyed the Founding Church — MCC Los Angeles — which was then located at 22nd and Union streets.

Though the fire proved to be arson, no charges were ever filed in this case. The building was insured for \$100,000, damages were estimated at \$90,000, and the congregation still owed \$45,000 on the mortgage.

The fire was started in the area around the church steeple, and spread from there, destroying both Pastor Troy Perry and Assistant Pastor Lee Carlton's offices. The sanctuary was also destroyed, the organ severely damaged, and the stained glass windows ruined.

The church had been dedicated just two years earlier, and was the first Fellowship building to be destroyed.

**MARCH 4, 1973:
MCC NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

Still a Mission at the time, MCC Nash-

ville had only about 12 members. They were meeting in an unused room over a downtown bar. The fire started in the bar and totally destroyed the building. The church lost their altar vessels, vestments, and organ.

The police report listed bad wiring as the cause. "We had no reason to doubt it," said a church representative, "the building was run down, in terrible shape and in a bad part of town, the warehouse district."

However, other establishments serving the gay community had been deliberately destroyed in that same neighborhood in recent months, and, whether "bad wiring" or arson destroyed the Nashville church will probably never be known for certain.

LEFT: The New Orleans Fire Department extinguishes fire at the Upstairs Lounge where 32 perished.

photo by G. E. Arnold

RIGHT: Burned out shell of the San Francisco MCC's church building after early morning fire by arson.

photo by Henri of San Francisco



JUNE 24, 1973:

MCC NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The most tragic fire in the history of the Fellowship to date, this deliberate arson claimed the lives of the pastor and ten members of the New Orleans congregation.

MCC New Orleans had been holding worship services in an unused back room of the Upstairs Lounge in the French Quarter on Sunday mornings, when the bar in front was closed. They had just recently moved from this back room to new quarters, and had returned to the bar to meet with a member who was donating an air conditioning unit for use in the new building. They had just completed arrangements for delivery and installation of the gift and were celebrating when the fire broke out.

Including others in the bar at the time, the final death toll was 32. That particular day just happened to be celebrated across the nation as Gay Pride Day.

The fire started on a Sunday night, and the eleven members killed were about a third of the total membership of the New Orleans congregation. According to fire officials, the Upstairs Lounge was in compliance with local fire codes.

Despite strong evidence of arson, no one was ever charged in conjunction with the New Orleans tragedy. The fire was referred to as "one of the worst fires in the city's history in terms of people killed."

JULY 27, 1973:

MCC SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Another early morning fire, the alarm sounded at 2:46 a.m. The church was a total loss. The 75 year old structure had withstood the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, but proved to be no match for a bonfire of hymnals piled up in the sanctuary and set ablaze.

Police protection was given to the church's pastor, the Rev. Elder James Sandmire, since part of the vandalism had

been threats against his life scrawled on the church door.

According to fire officials, the arson was rather an amateur job — three fires were set before one finally caught, and damages easily ran to over \$100,000 to the building which was owned by the United Presbyterian Church, and rented for worship by the MCC congregation.

JANUARY 25, 1974:

**WEST BAY MCC,
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA**

The facilities rented by the Santa Monica congregation were gutted by fire at 10:00 a.m., causing \$20,000 in damages to the chapel owned by the non-denominational Unity-by-the-Sea church.

Although the chapel was open 24 hours a day, the MCC congregation was the only group using it for worship at the time. A Holy Union ceremony had been scheduled for four days after the fire, possibly the reason behind the arson. The owner of the building reported receiving telephone calls before the fire where the caller, a woman, stated: "We don't want queers getting married in our church."

AUGUST 14, 1976:

**TRINITY MCC,
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA**

Just three short weeks after being burglarized, the Riverside church was totally destroyed by a fire which caused \$32,000 in damages.

Though early newspaper accounts attributed the fire to faulty wiring, the fire department finally came to the conclusion that it was impossible to determine what actually caused this fire.

The alarm was sounded at 1:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning.

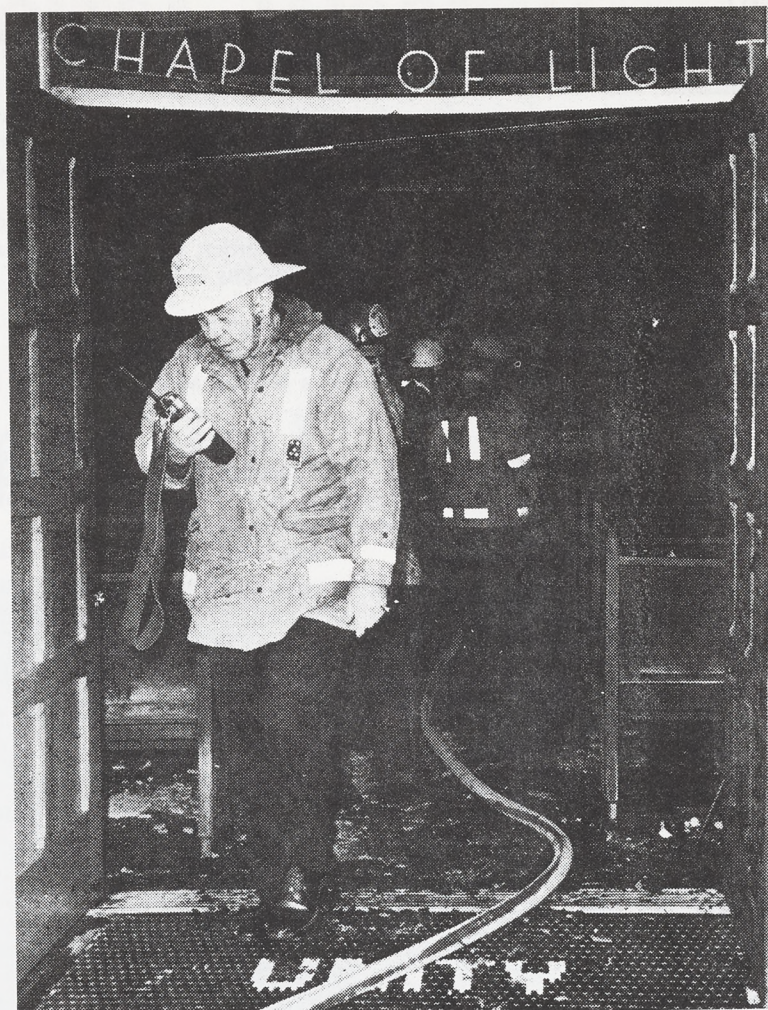


Photo by Doug Andrews

OCTOBER 4, 1976:

**KING OF PEACE MCC,
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

An early morning fire which totally destroyed the church and everything in it.

The structure, a one storey frame house north of town, was in the process of being converted into a church. It was insured for \$34,000.

The fire department, and all the newspaper accounts attribute the cause to faulty wiring, probably because the building was undergoing remodeling.

OCTOBER 23, 1977:

**CASA DE CRISTO MCC,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

This church burned on the night it was being used by the congregation for their Annual Meeting. The membership had just voted to expand the church's name from MCC Phoenix to Casa de Cristo MCC.

In the 45 minutes between the conclusion of the Congregational meeting and the evening worship service, the

building was fire-bombed, and the members and their pastor returned to find their church in flames and nine fire engines at the scene.

The Phoenix congregation was the first in the Fellowship after the Founding church in Los Angeles to own its own property. The fire hit when the congregation had just \$3,000 left in payments. Damages were estimated at about \$30,000, and with an insurance settlement of \$23,000, the church voted to relocate, rather than rebuild the destroyed building.

Phoenix pastor, Rev. Fred L. Pattison, had, just prior to the fire, been in a vocal, visible position in the city's news media. He had appeared on local radio and television stations, and had been covered by the daily newspaper because of Gay Pride Week activities.

Following that summer publicity, acts of violence against the church began to increase — theft, damage to cars during worship services, threatening letters, and then the October fire.

And the immediate verdict of the fire inspector: arson.

Be Glad!

Rev. Elder Troy Perry closes this article with his thoughts on church fires and vandalism, and what these things mean for us in MCC.

Whenever a congregation has to go through something as demoralizing as a fire — particularly if it's by arson — there are bound to be effects. I know that many of our church members look on church fires as a source of many problems and difficulties for the congregation, but I believe that we in MCC must learn to look at church fires and vandalism from another perspective: we must learn to see these things as an opportunity to witness Christ and the Gospel to the larger community, and as a chance to show our willingness to serve Christ and preach the Gospel — no matter what the cost!

Not only are fires and vandalism demoralizing to the congregations where they happen, but they also take their toll on the ministry of the church. Our clergy can be placed under great strain when, as is the case in Cleveland, Ohio, our worship coordinator and his lover returned home one day to find their home vandalized, their aquarium smashed, their pet dog — which they had owned for more than 12 years — killed and hanged from a tree limb, and their house set on fire.

Or the senseless vandalism which took place in Tampa, Florida, where pastor John Hose arrived at his church one day during the last week of May, 1977, to find over \$8,000 worth of damage done to the building. The cross had been torn off the cupola, stained glass windows were smashed and shattered, walls were splattered with eggs, the air conditioning unit had been destroyed, and the church sign pulled down, no easy task since it had been imbedded in cement.

At MCC of the Twin Cities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, pastor Joan Johnson had her worship services disrupted by vandals who painted obscenities on the church building with black spray paint. This was in the autumn of 1977.

And more recently, in January of this year, the Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey, pastor of MCC of the Resurrection in Houston, Texas, found that a cross had been burned on the church lawn by the Ku Klux Klan, and then had to endure many nights of harrasing telephone calls on her personal, unlisted telephone number. (For the complete story, see "Harrassment in Houston" in this issue of IN UNITY.) The FBI is investigating this case.

While none of us like to think about these things, still, they happen. And when they do we should call to mind these words of Jesus, who said: "Blessed are you when people shall revile you and shall persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

PAGE 10 — ABOVE: A fireman leaves the chapel where the Santa Monica church held services after fire gutted the building.

photo by Doug Arnold

PAGE 10 — BELOW: A front view of the Los Angeles church showing the steeple area where it is believed the fire started.

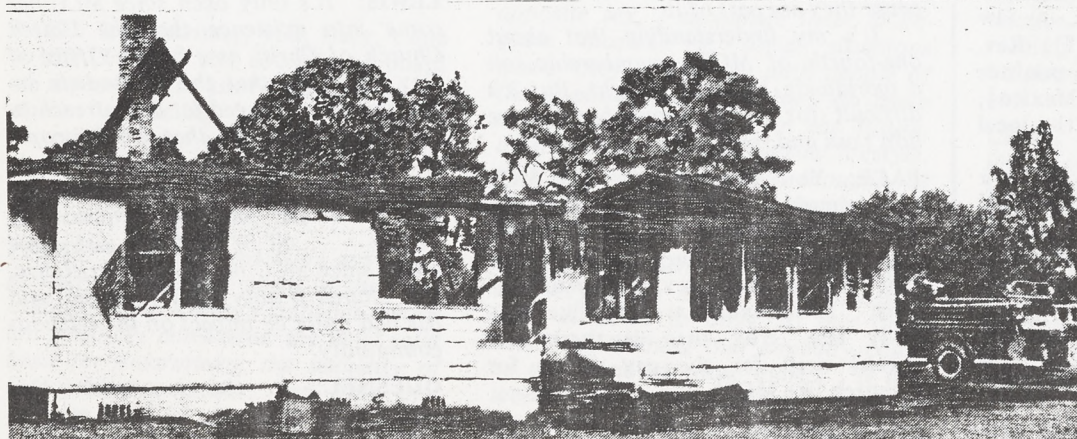
Church buildings burn down every day. But, relatively speaking, do you know of any other church organization which has lost 10 percent of its property to arson and vandalism in just five short years?

What does this mean?

Can we expect this situation to continue?

How should these things be viewed?

These questions will be addressed in the June issue of IN UNITY.



ABOVE: A side view of the burned out Los Angeles, California church the day after fire totally destroyed the building.

LEFT: The St. Petersburg, Florida church the morning after fire destroyed the building. photo by Tony Lopez



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PACE MAGAZINE
Fresno, California — December 1, 1977

AN INTERVIEW

by Mark Hedlund

"A church in which women and men are one in Christ Jesus, a church in which there is a mingling of rich and poor, old and young, handsome and homely, butch and fem, transvestites and leather devotees, a church which welcomes gay people and straight people to worship together, to witness together, and to work and serve together . . ."

Perhaps these are odd words to use in describing a Christian denomination, but this is how the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches perceives its call. Rev. Troy D. Perry, a gay minister who was banned from his former church when his sexuality was discovered, founded the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in 1968.

Since that time, MCC has established itself worldwide, with over 100 congregations and 130 ordained and licensed ministers. The Fresno church failed when first formed a few years ago, but it's now growing after existing here for one year with about 150 members.

MCC was described as "The church that does not discriminate."

Gary Lewis, an outspoken homosexual and human rights advocate, has been worship director (coordinator) as a ministerial intern. A few weeks ago (November, 1977), Rev. Steve Quesnel, a licensed minister from Albuquerque, [New Mexico], moved to Fresno to become the local MCC's first official minister.

Both men are serious about their church and their role as spiritual leaders, though lately that's been overshadowed by the controversy involving gay teachers in California schools. Here they discuss the spiritual, political and sociological situation of gays: estimated to comprise nearly one-tenth of the general population.

MCC FRESNO: A Witness in the Community

PACE: You've said there's an objection with reference to the Metropolitan Community Church as "a gay church." Is it not, in fact, just that?

QUESNEL: No, it is a Christian church, which has a very effective and primary outreach to the gay community, but we also have an outreach into, for example, state and federal prisons. This outreach isn't limited to gay prisoners. Approximately 80 per cent of the prisoners with whom we are in contact are heterosexual.

There is a rejection of the handicapped people as being a viable portion of the Christian ministry for most churches. Our ministry into that realm has been a very active thing for four years.

LEWIS: In Fresno I'm doing the only fifth step counseling at Avanti, which is an alcoholic rehab program. They've attempted to find other ministers, but have found it difficult to find someone to do it. Many of the mainstream churches are so caught up in new buildings and their own groups that they forget that there's a world out there that's suffering. MCC, because of the very nature of some of the people that originally started it, — gay people — is aware of that suffering because they are part of it.

It's my understanding that about one-fourth of MCC's membership, on a worldwide basis, is straight. But it's difficult for us to know, because we don't ask and really don't care.

PACE: You pointed out that MCC isn't simply a gay church. But the primary purpose admittedly is to the gay community. Gary, you've said that beside their sexual persuasions most homosexuals are just like anybody else. Why then is there that special need for the gay person for a church like MCC?

LEWIS: To go to another church they have to lie about being gay. That's usually a lie of omission; they just don't say anything. We have a gay couple — two men — who have been together for some time, and they went to another church before coming to MCC. It's a rather liberal church. They went to the pastor after the service, and neither one of them could be identified as a homosexual in any way. They told him they were gay, and were a couple, and asked if they could still attend the church. He said, "Yes, but why don't you just pretend that you're just friends. Don't let anybody know that there's anything more to it than that, because the congregation couldn't handle it." So here you are, sitting with somebody you share your life with, somebody that you love and have had a relationship with for several years, and you can't hold hands, you can't put your arm around him, you can't receive communion together . . . because the congregation "can't handle it." That's why there's such a need.

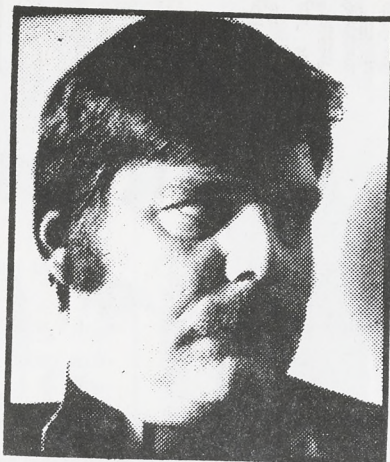
PACE: Your critics would say that simply the existence of the MCC is blasphemous, because homosexuality is indeed a sin.

LEWIS: It's only been since MCC has come into existence that the United Church of Christ now has an Office of Gay Concerns, that the Methodists are looking into the need for an outreach to the gay community, that the Episcopal church has dealt with and ordained an open lesbian, that the Catholic church has more and more recognized gay people . . . all of that has just come about since MCC has been in existence. Our church is only eight years old, and has had quite an impact on the religious community.

QUESNEL: In the invocation that

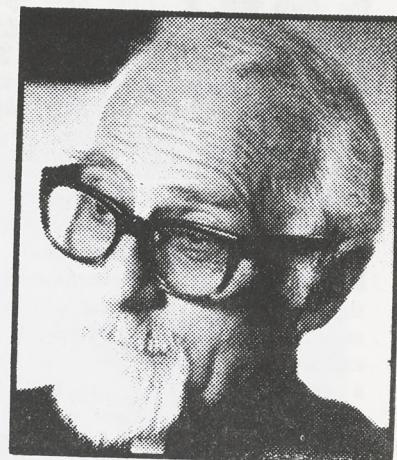
Mr. Gary Lewis,
former Worship
Coordinator of
MCC Fresno, CA.

Photo by
Robert Hanashiro



Rev. Steve Quesnel
Worship Coordinator
MCC Fresno, CA

Photo by
Robert Hanashiro



Christ made, He said "Come all ye." He did not say, "Come all ye heterosexuals who use the missionary position once a month." He said, "Come all ye." That invocation in itself justifies us coming to Jesus and saying, "I believe."

PACE: You've mentioned that MCC performs two ceremonies joining people together. One is the marriage ceremony, and the other is a Holy Union, which is the joining of two people of the same sex. Could you explain that?

LEWIS: Marriage is for heterosexuals. It's historically an event between a man and a woman. When the term marriage is used, the role models that automatically spring up are man and woman. For same-sex partners to try [to model their relationship after a heterosexual] marriage means that one must play the man and one must play the woman, which is disastrous in these kinds of unions. Marriage is always associated with children and the nuclear family, too.

The MCC has established an entirely new union, because there is no role model. It's incumbent upon the individuals involved to develop their own relationship.

PACE: Last summer, you, Gary, came to the [Fresno] city council and board of supervisors to ask for funding to set up a counseling center specifically directed to gays or those who thought they might be homosexual. Why is that necessary, and why should the government support this?

LEWIS: It's incumbent upon any elected body to meet the needs of the community. Using Kinsey's statistics (which are generally considered the most valid basis for determining the sexuality of the general populace, and state that ten per cent of all people are homo-

sexual), our community here [in Fresno] is about 20,000 people whose needs aren't being answered. There are thousands of young people who are presently questioning their sexuality, and they have nowhere that they can turn to ask questions about themselves. They can't go to their peers, they can't go to their teachers or school counselors, or ministers, or parents, so who do they go to? They go to no one.

There's a misconception among many people that if someone comes to Rev. Quesnel or myself for counseling, that we're going to counsel them into being homosexual. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In my experience in counseling young people — and I've had numerous occasions to do this — they come to me at 12 or 14 years old and say, "I'm gay." The first thing I say is, "How do you know you're gay?" And they say, "Well, I'm attracted to men, or boys my own age, etc." That may last, or it may not.

I ask them, "Why is it important to you to shove yourself into a pigeonhole at your age? Can't you just relax? Do you have to, right now, call yourself any kind of sexual being?" I encourage them to date members of the opposite sex, I encourage them to become involved in social situations where they can mingle with people of the opposite sex, so if they do make the decision, sometime in the future, to drift towards a homosexual lifestyle, that decision is a well thought-out decision of their own emotional processes. It's not a snap decision.

QUESNEL: When I was a teenager, I was very much aware that I was sexually attracted to boys. At that time, the WORST thing that anybody could be was "one of those queers." It was several years after I became aware of my own attraction to the same sex be-

fore I ever heard the term "queer," and some of the other derogatory terms applied to gay males. I felt an intense loneliness, because I didn't know that there was anybody else in that town of 10,000 people . . . statistically there were 1,000 others . . . that were like me. I was alone, I was frightened, I could feel hostility towards people who were like me.

PACE: In the early 1970's, I can recall on campuses especially, the gay activist groups started to emerge to defend the rights of homosexuals. There was a lot of "coming out" by gays. Until the Anita Bryant thing in Florida, there weren't that many coordinated political attacks on this whole idea. Now, it's developed into a great confrontation both socially and politically. As that's occurred, it's caused a lot of discussion and kept the issue at the forefront. Is this a good thing or a bad thing for the gay community?

QUESNEL: The way the political pendulum is beginning to swing, we as gay people need to increase the awareness of society to us. Not as the stereotypical "swishy fag," but as full, productive, feeling, acting — rather than reacting — human beings. They need to be aware that we're not so very different.

LEWIS: We should say that any political statements made by either of us are as individuals; they are not stances of the church. My political belief is, that in the light of Watergate, in light of the refusal of government agencies to disseminate information, and the problems that causes, the American public is entitled to, and requests, information about homosexuality. We have to be very thankful to people like Miss Bryant, and people like (Califor-

nia State Senator John) Briggs, who have caused the issue to be brought to the forefront. I would hate to think there would be any attempt to suppress this information. Miss Bryant has had every opportunity to express her viewpoint, and I would hope the gay community could respond in kind.

PACE: The [Briggs] initiative would ban homosexual teachers from schools. It would also mandate that school boards fire and not hire people that they know are gay. Part of the basic argument is that when children are exposed to the homosexual role — a person that they know is homosexual — the kids might be inclined to experiment with homosexuality. That's the gravest fear that people have.

LEWIS: *It has to be remembered that all homosexuals were raised by heterosexual parents, and taught probably predominantly by heterosexual teachers. Yet they still became homosexuals. I think the opposite would be in effect also. There's nothing so special or contagious about homosexuality that would make it different from heterosexuality. Children who are heterosexual, even though they have a homosexual teacher, still have heterosexual parents, still have heterosexual relatives, still have heterosexual friends, and the influence of what one teacher would do would be very minute. Almost all learning theories in growth and development say that sexuality is determined at latest by the time the child is five years old. So it's the parents who really determine that — if there's any external influence at all. It's very set by the time the child is in school.*

QUESNEL: We really have to look at the figures. In the last year here in Fresno, 97 per cent of the cases of child molestation had no homosexual overtones at all. One of the two remaining cases was a matter in which the father molested both daughter and son. Based on these figures, I as a homosexual . . . who has a child . . . really think that the child is more in danger from the heterosexual teachers than from homosexual teachers.

PACE: If the initiative became law, what ramifications do you see?

LEWIS: First of all, using Kinsey's study, there's an estimated 22,000 teachers who are homosexual in the state. It's estimated it would cost \$5,000 minimum to take each of those teachers out of the school system. So we're talking about \$3 million for the state to dismiss teachers that



Gary Lewis, the former Worship Coordinator of MCC Fresno, California, and the Rev. Steve Quesnel, presently serving as the congregation's Worship Coordinator. The banner was made by a member of the Fresno congregation.

it already has. That's not counting any court battles, or unemployment for the teachers who were fired. It's not counting the dismissal of administrators, counselors, or teacher's aides. That's just the financial impact.

It must be remembered that this is any teacher in the California school system. That's not just elementary, junior high and high schools, it means universities too. So any instructor teaching about human sexuality that taught about homosexuality as part of the class would be up to be fired, even if they were heterosexual. It states that any person who advocates homosexuality, or perpetuates in any manner, homosexuality, will be fired. So a heterosexual teacher who says homosexuality is a viable lifestyle alternative . . . which is what the American Psychiatric Association has said . . . any teacher, at any level, who makes this statement to the class would be eligible to be fired. We're talking about real oppression. There's the probability of a witchhunt. I don't know how they would find out, unless they started peeking in the windows or demanding every teacher be married.

PACE: Obviously, you feel homosexuality needs to be discussed, that people need to be aware of it. What kind of an approach would you suggest?

LEWIS: I do not think homosexuality should be advocated at any level in the

educational system. I also don't think that heterosexuality should be advocated. I don't think that the classroom is the place to advocate anything. The classroom is a place to disseminate information. I do believe that as individuals quest for knowledge, that knowledge should be given to them. One of the places would be the classroom. It should be factual, and devoid of myths.

PACE: How can a homosexual be defined as an oppressed minority?

LEWIS: For instance, a gay couple has no rights to tax breaks. They have no inheritance laws covering them. I cannot serve in the armed services, although I might want to serve. The old argument that it would cause problems can be dispelled by looking at Great Britain, which accepts homosexuals in the armed services, and there have been no problems.

If I want to bring a class action suit, I can't. The law states that you have to notify all the members of the class, so I would have to notify all homosexuals that I was bringing a suit. Because homosexuals are so suppressed, how could I identify all of those people?

Another is the police. We have a good relationship with our police department [in Fresno], but that's not so elsewhere, like in Los Angeles. In their vice squad there are detectives who

go into a public restroom, stand there for hours, and as other men come in, they expose themselves to those men and attempt to get some kind of reaction. If they do get a reaction, they arrest them. I have to ask what kind of personality would be involved for a man to stand in a public restroom for several hours exposing himself to people. I would question the emotional development of such an individual. I personally could not do that. It would have to be considered above and beyond the call of duty.

QUESNEL: The hotel bath-house that burned in New York city was sub-standard in wiring, sub-standard in fire-fighting capability. Nobody enforced those regulations because "that's where queers go."

LEWIS: There was an article in the Advocate Newspaper, which is circulated to the gay community, where a gay fireman who is closeted is on an inspection team in Los Angeles. He said when they go to a gay establishment to inspect it, they're told not to find any infractions, because "the queers deserve to burn anyway."

PACE: Has there been enough political mobilization by the gay community in fighting what you see as oppression . . . not only concerning the Briggs initiative, but other issues as well?

LEWIS: There is an organization called the Fresno Coalition to Save Our Human Rights. It is not a gay rights organization, it is a human rights organization. It's currently looking into not only the Briggs initiative, but women's rights, Chicano rights, black rights, many different areas of discrimination. It will disseminate educational materials, and will provide speakers on any of these subjects to dispell the myths about any minority group. There is a mobilization of the entire community to prevent any minority segment from discriminating against anybody . . . and it really is a minority segment that's attempting to do this discrimination. It's been my experience in speaking engagements that the majority of people leave after the speaking engagement saying, "I never thought of it that way." They also say, "I've never known a gay person." and that's not true. They have never known the TRUST of a gay person.

When we start dealing from emotions, then we get into bigotry and persecution and discrimination. If we deal with logic and factual information, then we don't have to worry about the bigotry and persecution. An informed, logical person, is not a person that is given to discrimination or bigotry. †



Heathrow Airport at 6:00 AM! Members of the Thames Valley congregation are up and out to greet Rev. Elder Freda Smith as she arrives for her visit to the congregations in the United Kingdom. (L to R) Jose von Buhler, Derrick, John, Noel, Paul, Tom and Peter.

"ONE IN THE SPIRIT"

ELDER
FREDA
SMITH
VISITS
the
FELLOWSHIP
CONGREGATIONS
in the
UNITED
KINGDOM

by the Rev. Jo McVey Abbott

Only four years had passed since Rev. Perry's first service in Los Angeles, California, when MCC London was founded on October 8, 1972, the first congregation of the Universal Fellowship outside of the United States. The Fellowship was still very small, then, and contact between Britain and other parts of the church was difficult and limited, so inevitably many British church members felt a little isolated. This was aggravated by the fact that the fellowship was often regarded as an "American" church, and the concept of its international character had not yet been realized. This led, in some instances, to a sense of alienation by members of the Fellowship in the United Kingdom.

MCC in Europe faced some special problems. Some were the internal difficulties faced by any new and growing church group, but others had to do with external situations, such as the huge variations in culture, language and church traditions in Europe. (Crossing national boundaries in Europe is a much more complicated matter than crossing state boundaries in the United States or Australia.) But the greatest problem the Fellowship faces in Europe is that

it has had to operate in a very old culture which is highly secularized and intensely materialistic, and in which there is much concern over ecclesiastical matters—though the Church and its influence (and to some degree its credibility) are in rapid decline.

It had been thought from the outset that MCC's progress in Europe would be slow. It proved to be painfully slow, and after five years of hard, steady work, there were still only three active congregations in the United Kingdom, and none in continental Europe. Such smallness, though significant in itself, only served to emphasize the sense of isolation from the rest of the Fellowship of the congregations in Britain, and pointed out the need for better communications throughout all the church.

In more recent times, however, the international character of the Universal Fellowship has become an important concern throughout the church, and many efforts have been made to help strengthen the ties that bind the Fellowship together, both by the elected officers of the Fellowship, the Board of Elders, and by the local congregations, particularly those outside of the United

States. Such an event occurred recently, toward the end of 1977!

The Rev. Elder Freda Smith arrived at London Airport on December 4. Despite the gruelling 13-hour flight from the west coast of the United States, she immediately began to get involved with the purpose for her visit, that of trying to find ways to improve communications and strengthen Fellowship ties with the congregations in England and Europe. She began her visit by preaching at the worship service of MCC Thames Valley (about 30 miles south west of central London), and her next five days were filled with meetings with the members of the Thames Valley congregation, its Interim Board of Directors, and its Worship Coordinator, Jose von Buhler, who is also the Church Extension Officer for the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

Later in her visit, Elder Smith met with the full Committee for Church Extension, which was set up by the Board of Elders in September of 1977, and consists of Jose von Buhler, [Church Extension Officer,] Jo McVey Abbott, [Worship Coordinator of MCC Birmingham, and Church Extension Secretary,] and the Rev. Ken Taylor, [Pastor of MCC London.] *Note: Both Mr. von Buhler and Mr. McVey Abbott were licensed to the ministry at Ministers' Conference in Portland, Oregon, USA, in late January of 1968. Rev. Ken*

Taylor has, since Elder Smith's visit, accepted the call to serve as pastor of MCC Greensboro, North Carolina, in the United States. Discussions between Elder Smith and the Committee for Church Extension were wide-ranging, but centered primarily around the preparatory work already done by the Committee, problem areas and methods of tackling these, and the needs for Church Extension work in terms of ministerial staff and finances.

From Thames Valley, Elder Smith moved on to London, where she did all, (or almost all) the things American visitors traditionally do when visiting England and its historic landmarks. But sightseeing tours were, of necessity, sandwiched between a very heavy schedule of business.

First Elder Smith met with the London church Board of Directors over a pot-luck supper—a time of fellowship, prayer and discussion which was both enjoyable and beneficial for all in attendance. Later, she met in a similar setting with the London Deacons, whose work she compared with that of their counterparts elsewhere in the Fellowship. And still later, she addressed a meeting of over 250 women, which was arranged by the newly-formed *National Organization of Lesbians and Sappho*, (Europe's largest organization for gay women), and was interviewed by *Gay News*, Europe's premier



Elder Smith cuts the special cake made for the occasion by Peggy Bennett, a member of MCC Birmingham. A similar cake made by Peggy was raffled off and raised £25.00 (Almost \$50.00) for the Gay Center.



Rev. Elder Freda Smith and The Rev. Jose von Buhler with "Bella", a member of the Thames Valley congregation whom Freda was told was "Eighty-five years young!"



Tom Hithcock, Deaf Interpreter for the London congregation. Two hands are used for spelling out the English alphabet in Great Britain, as opposed to the one hand method used in America!



Members of MCC Birmingham: (L to R) Top Row: John; Rev. Jo McVey Abbott; Derrick Smith (from Manchester). (L to R) Bottom Row: Horace Bennett, Peggy Bennett; John.

newspaper for gay women and men. The media generally took very little interest in coverage of Elder Smith's visit, which may have been a blessing in some ways, since her schedule was already very crowded!

During Elder Smith's stay in London something very special happened for the first time: All the MCC congregations in Britain gathered together for a weekend of fellowship and worship—first at a social and disco on Saturday evening of December 10th, and then in a united communion service on the Sunday morning following. Elder Smith preached for this service, and her message held the congregation enthralled, raising her listeners at times up to peaks of laughter, and at other times sobering them with piercing, convicting challenges. The Spirit of God moved mightily to confirm her words, and many were deeply touched. This first united worship service ended, and people left on a spiritual high, tinged just a little with the sadness of parting as Thames Valley and Birmingham folk went on their way home—the latter group full of anticipation for Elder Smith's arrival in their city, England's "Second City", Birmingham.

On Thursday, December 15th, accompanied by two members of the London church, Elder Smith arrived at Birmingham's Gay Community Centre, where the Birmingham congregation holds its services and meetings. She should have been exhausted by this time, but showed no sign of it and

began her visit by attending the regular Bible Study group there, and then on Saturday a Spiritual Renewal, which was uplifting for everyone in attendance, and which was followed by the Gay Community Centre's regular social and disco.

This weekend of Elder Smith's visit in Birmingham was one of surprises, one of which was that MCC Birmingham was able to welcome and share in fellowship with visitors from Manchester and the northeast of England who came with offers of assistance in developing MCC congregations in their areas. Many felt that it was the working of the Holy Spirit that Elder Smith was on hand to share with and counsel these visitors!

The Birmingham weekend climaxed with a communion service, where Elder Smith's words and the discernable presence of the Holy Spirit challenged everyone once again. Then, on Monday evening, there was a women-only social, and the program came to an end on Tuesday evening with MCC Birmingham's Carol Service, which brought another surprise—a most happy one—three Thames Valley members who had driven a hundred miles to be present, and who then snatched Elder Smith and escorted her back to London!

At the London Airport there were a few last minute meetings and consultations, and then, amidst rejoicing mingled with sadness, everyone was saying a tearful goodbye to Elder Smith as she was homeward-bound to Sacramento, California. Members

of MCC Birmingham had asked her, when she attended their Carol Service, if she had extra room in her luggage? When she asked why, she was told that she would need it, because she was "taking all our hearts back with you!"

The Sisters and Brothers in Great Britain sent these words of testimony to IN UNITY concerning Elder Smith's visit to their congregations:

"How shall we describe her? A conqueror! In the name of Christ she conquered that vast geographical gulf and our own sense of isolation, which have served to keep us a little distant from the rest of the Fellowship; She conquered the remoteness of the Elders and others, for she brought all our sisters and brothers with her in the Spirit; and by her wisdom, her charm, her concern, and her love, she conquered all our hearts.

To God we give thanks for providing our Fellowship with such a woman, indeed a most worthy witness to the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Board of Elders, we give thanks for arranging her visit—and we look forward to welcoming our next visiting Elder!

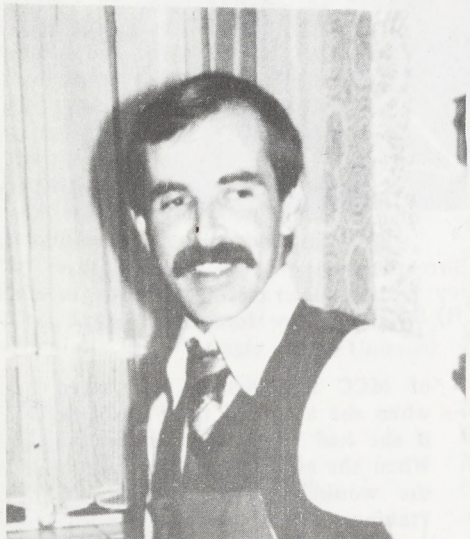
To MCC Sacramento, we give thanks for giving up their pastor to us for these three weeks, and we ask them to cherish with love such a precious gift from God.

And to dearest Freda, we give thanks for just being you; a better ambassador for the Universal Fellowship and for

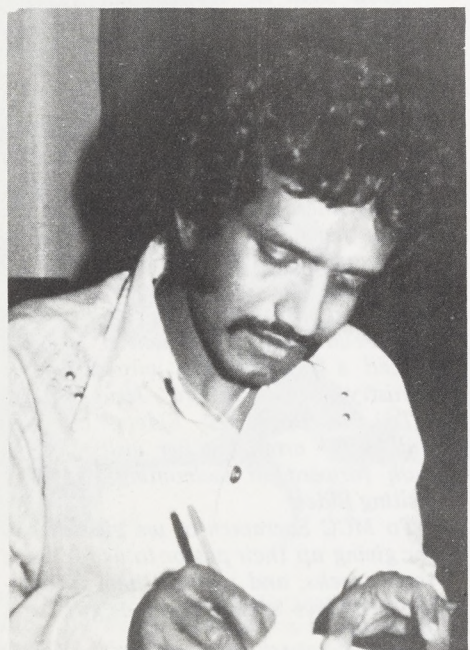
Christ could not easily be found. Don't stay away too long. We love you.

And Finally, these words:

"You are not remote, or distant, or separated. Nor are we. No matter how many miles there are between us, or how poor we are at communicating, or how rarely we can visit one another, through Christ all of our sisters and brothers in all the Metropolitan Community Churches throughout the world are here—right here—in our hearts. In the Universal Fellowship we are one in the Spirit!" ■



London MCC church clerk is Jim Heslop. Jim is an active Board member and doubles as the church's pianist/organist.



London Deacon Moussa Outim has been involved in a world-wide preaching ministry. Now he calls MCC home.

THREE MOUNTAINS: Continued from page 4

helped the people in a time of need; a Mountain of Revelation where God revealed to the people their future society under the Law in the land of promise; and a Mountain of Disappointment, where — because impatience and anger led him to disobedience — God's servant Moses died on the threshold of seeing fulfilled everything for which he'd lived.

As I said before, the account of the Exodus is a moving and powerful testimony of a loving God leading a loved people from oppression and bondage to freedom, and that in this account — pictured by the three mountains — there is a lesson and warning for us today.

The lesson is that God is a God of continuing revelation, and if God moved in the past to liberate God's people from oppression, then we can expect God to move again whenever oppression burdens down God's beloved people.

God intercedes for us just as God interceded for the Israelites at Rephidim. We, like the people of Israel, started our Exodus for freedom when a man of God said "God loves you" to a person who was in despair. A church was born out of that statement — our church — and through this new church our people started on their own journey to freedom.

That first church, Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, held up the symbolic "rod" of God's presence and power alone for over a year, and then, when the task became difficult, God sent helpers, like Aaron and Hur, in the form of new congregations to help hold the "rod" aloft. God helped us in our need, and we in our turn, moved on to freedom with new strength and confidence. We had experienced our Mountain of Intercession.

God spoke to Moses and revealed to him the Law on Sinai's heights. And so too for us: God raised up and anointed a prophet for our people and revealed — first to him and then to all the church — what kind of society God wishes for the people of God. It is to be a godly society, but, instead of the Law of Moses, this society is to be based of the principles underlying the Law, principles which God made known in the greatest revelation of all time, the revelation of Jesus Christ. God revealed to us our destiny, and having seen the plans for this God-ordered society we, in our turn, found a new

purpose in our lives. We had experienced our Sinai — our Mountain of Revelation.

But what about the third mountain, Mount Nebo — the Mountain of Disappointment? Will we, like Moses, be disobedient and rebel against God and not sanctify God in the eyes of the world? Will we, who are the vanguard of a great crowd of people who are being led by God to freedom; will we have to stand alone on Pisgah's heights and watch the people we have led to freedom enter the "Promised Land" without us? Will anger and impatience be our downfall when the journey to freedom becomes long and tiresome?

This is the warning! The Mountain of Disappointment looms in the distance ahead of us, but — and this is our hope and prayer — if we are faithful to God; if we do not rebel against God when our journey to freedom is long and hard; if we do not fall snare to anger and impatience and disobedience; if we sanctify God before all the world; if we endure in faith, and trust in our revelation of God's unbounded love — then we will never stand alone on Mount Nebo; we will enter the new Land of Promise, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, with all of God's people singing and rejoicing! Our Mount Nebo, the Mountain of Disappointment, will turn into Mount Zion, the holy mountain of God! †

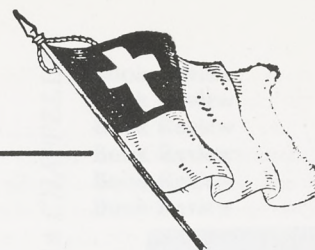


HOW TO "GET RID" OF A MINISTER

Slightly amended!

- 1 — Look him straight in the eye when he is preaching, and say "Amen" once in a while. He'll preach himself to death in a few weeks.
- 2 — Pat her on the back and brag about her good points. She'll work herself to death.
- 3 — Start paying him a living wage. He's probably been on starvation wages so long he'll eat himself to death.
- 4 — Rededicate your own life to Christ, and ask the preacher to give you a job to do. She'll probably die of heart failure.
- 5 — Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher. Your minister will become so effective that some larger church will eagerly take him or her off your hands.

Dr. Gerald H. Kennedy



Presbyterians on Homosexuality

The United Presbyterian General Assembly will be asked to rule next May that it is up to presbyteries (area governing units) and congregations to decide whether they ordain self-acknowledged practicing homosexual persons to offices in the church.

The report of a task force that spent 15 months studying the subject makes that recommendation. A minority report of the task force asks the General Assembly — highest decision-making body of the 2.6 million-member-denomination — to rule that the church's constitution precludes the ordination of self-acknowledged practicing homosexual persons.

Both the task force report and the minority report were approved for transmission to the General Assembly by the Advisory Council on Church and Society, which considered the documents in a January 14-16 meeting in Philadelphia. The Advisory Council by a 12 to 3 vote recommended Assembly adoption of the policy statement and recommendations proposed by the task force majority. The council also placed a restriction on public media use of the decisions until a summary of the actions could be sent to all pastors in the denomination.

The task force report, made up of about 150 pages of study material and a 28-page proposed policy statement, cites a constitutional provision that the acceptability of a candidate for ordination to the ministry "is reserved entirely to the ordaining presbytery." The report contends that "Any attempt by the General Assembly to pre-empt that intensely individual decision in general and in advance would violate the power and responsibility of the presbytery and challenge the working of the Holy Spirit." Similarly, it cites constitutional provisions that sessions (local church governing bodies) have the power "to decide who shall be members of the

church" and that congregations have an exclusive right to select their own officers. (Deacons and ruling elders in the denomination are ordained and take nearly the same vows as do the clergy).

The General Assembly was asked two years ago to provide advice on the ordination of avowed, practicing homosexual persons. That Assembly held that such ordination "would at the present time be injudicious if not improper," but called for the task force study. Last year the Assembly rejected efforts to cut short the study, while reaffirming the 1976 position.

The task force papers will go to the 190th General Assembly (1978), which meets in San Diego, Calif., beginning May 16.

Much of the material in the background paper is summarized in the proposed policy statement. Among the major points in the proposed statement:

1. Sexual orientation is best understood as affectional attraction rather than sexual behavior, and homosexuality "is a strong, enduring, not consciously chosen and usually irreversible affectional attraction to and preference for persons of the same sex."

2. Homosexuality "is a minor theme in Scripture" and is not mentioned either by the prophets or by Jesus himself.

3. In the full context of Scripture, "...we must conclude that Paul's understanding of homosexual behavior does not adequately encompass the modern phenomenon of multiple forms of homosexuality arising from a variety of psychosocial causes..."

4. Homosexual persons may be admitted to church membership or the ordained offices if they can give honest affirmation to the vows required and if the deciding body is satisfied that the candidates meet all the criteria for membership or ordination.

5. Nothing in the church's constitution either prohibits or required the ordination of self-affirming practicing homosexual persons, and therefore the judgment of the ordaining body as to fitness of any candidate, judged as an individual, is the decisive factor.

6. "Ordination in no way sets a person apart into a class or status separated from other Christians. The laying on of hands in and of itself imparts no special grace or character..."

7. Continuing and widespread study is needed, including efforts to heal the church of its homophobia (irrational fear of homosexuality and homosexual persons).

Specific recommendations of the task force also include applying the same seminary admission standards to homosexual and heterosexual students, work toward the decriminalization of private homosexual acts between consenting adults, and work for the passage of laws which prohibit discrimination against homosexual persons in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

The minority report asks the General Assembly to "exercise its judicial role as the highest judicatory of the church...and determine a definitive interpretation of the Constitution which specifies that self-affirming practicing homosexual persons may not be ordained" to any office in the church.

Among points highlighted in the minority report:

1. "No scriptures speak of homosexuality as granted by God. No scriptures permit or condone any of the forms of homosexuality...All of scripture speaks with one voice, unequivocally demonstrating that homosexual practice is not the will of God for His [sic] beloved children..."

2. "There is no place within the Christian faith for...homophobia."

3. "No general rule for church membership can be formulated which applies in every individual case...churches are responsible to follow the Spirit's leading in the admission or retention of members with a careful mixture of love and discretion."

Please turn to page 23

DEBORAH'S SONG

ARTICLES BY AND FOR FEMINIST WOMEN AND MEN

What is Sexism?

by the Rev. Rhea Miller

reprinted from
MOTHER EAGLE REVIEW
Northeast District Women's Newsletter

Isn't that obvious? Of course—it's unequal pay and rights for women. Or is it? Picture the following scenes:

Imagine that you enter a new job in some department of a business or company. You meet the boss who promptly introduces you to "the girls" in the department and then to Mr. Scott and Mr. Wilson and Mr. Jones, and continually comes up to you during your work day and asks, "Would you type this up quickly for me, honey?"

Now imagine the same scene, except that you are introduced to "the boys" in the department, and then to Ms. Scott and Ms. Wilson and Ms. Jones, and whenever the boss comes up to you with a request you reply, "Sure, is there anything else you'd like, Poopsie?"

Or imagine this:

You enter seminary and discover that the course "The Nature of Man" has been changed to "The Nature of Woman" with the reasoning that "woman" is an inclusive term, that the word "woman" includes the word "man", and that "she" includes the word "he".

Or imagine that you are introduced to a group of lawyers as Mr. Sheila Wilson, the husband of our minister; or Mr. Jane Jones, the husband of our city's Chamber of Commerce president; or Mr. Pam Stevens, the husband of

our county school superintendent.

Or picture yourself attending a conference where the men are in the kitchen and the women are handling the business, transportation and maintenance. Or imagine that all advertising has a picture of a man in bikini trunks—including advertising for laundry detergents, cars, liquor, and cake mixes.

Or picture being a male and calling up the employment office for a job as a secretary and being refused because of your gender. Or imagine visiting the first grade at your school and seeing your son told that "little boys don't cry."

Is this sexism?

No. These things are only the fruits of sexism. Consider this:

Did you know that prior to the writing of the Old Testament people did not know about "paternity"? People didn't know then that men had anything to do with the making of a child. People thought that women alone were responsible for birth. Thus, people worshipped "goddesses" and not gods. Did you know that in Old Testament times the situation was just reversed? Women were thought only to be the "nests" and men were thought to be solely responsible for procreation and conception. If semen were spilled on the ground, men thought that they were losing the possibility of another human being. At this time religion became patriarchal.

The early Church fathers also believed in "paternity" alone. Thomas Aquinas believed in Aristotelian biology, and that girl children were defective human beings—the result of something happening to the male sperm. Jerome believed that women were only useful as nests, and otherwise were only potential

trouble. Thus, he encouraged all women to be dirty physically so as to be unattractive: a "bad" woman was a clean woman. Did you know that the Old Testament has numerous references, especially in Isaiah, to [Jehovah] as having maternal qualities? But is all this sexism?

Only partly. Sexism is even more than this. Sexism is the assumption that "If it was good enough for my grandparents, it's good enough for me", and that "It's always been done this way". Sexism is modeling after what has passed before, never simply accepting what is given to us now. Sexism is always "knowing", never "discovering"; it is stereotyping, not describing; it is worshipping the past and not daring to live the unknown future as it unfolds to us. It is not daring to take Christ's offer of new life seriously. It is wanting to assert that people were made for the law and tradition, and not that the law and tradition were made for people. How long does it take us to realize the millions of ways in which the world has its unconscious hold over our lives? We are called to live in this world, but not to be of it. We are called to trust and accept ourselves as God's unique gift. We cannot all be the same. We are called to be who we really are in faith. It is frightening, but we have been assured that we have nothing to fear in God.

Then what is sexism? It is an attempt to put people in their place, to keep them under control, to deny them their God-given uniqueness and calling. Jesus spent his whole life challenging rules, roles, and stereotypes. He also taught us that all things are possible in God.

Let us dare to live those possibilities!





PASTOR
FEATURED
IN
MONTREAL
STAR
ARTICLE

The Saturday, January 28, 1978, edition of the *Montreal Star* carried an article on gay religious groups in and around Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Metropolitan Community Church was mentioned in the article, as well as the Montreal pastor, the Rev. Jo Anne Monti. The portion dealing with MCC is as follows:

"Metropolitan Community Church is a Christian Church and in that it is no different from many other churches," states the November 1977 Newsletter of the Ottawa congregation.

"But our church is different in that we are a Christian Church with an outreach to the gay community. However, we are not, as has been said of us from time to time, a gay church. We are there to bring Christ's message of love to all people, regardless of their sexuality; and we put the emphasis squarely on Christ."

According to the Rev. Jo Anne Monti, the Montreal MCC minister, the emphasis is ecumenical with the church opening its doors to all "who want to know Christ and serve Him."

She talks readily about her homosexual orientation, admitting it had troubled her conscience for years and finding no relief until she attended an MCC service in Toronto in 1973.

"I felt at home immediately," she says. "I cried with joy. I could be gay, female and Christian all at the same time. All three of me were integrated in that one moment. I never felt so near to Christ as I did then."

She sensed a call to the MCC ministry and began studying under the guidance of the Rev. Robert Wolfe, then minister of the Toronto congregation, and at St. Michael's College, Toronto.

She was licensed as an MCC spiritual leader in January, 1977, and came to Montreal to form a congregation last August. To date, it has about 15 members, and is meeting at 2320 Linclon Avenue, apartment 5. (telephone 937-9696).

PHOTOS: Above — the Rev. Jo Anne Monti, pastor of Emmanuel MCC, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Below — Rev. Monti presides at the celebration of the Lord's Meal.



THE REV. LUCIA CHAPPELLE

Book Review
Book Review
Book Review
Book Review
Book Review



Book Review

WORDS AND WOMEN: New Language in New Times, Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Anchor Press / Doubleday, 1976; Anchor Books Edition, 1977, 177 pp.

Words and Women accomplishes something we in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches have been talking about for years: it sets forth a complete, scholarly, comprehensible analysis of sexism in language. Far more than a technical examination of a few words, *Words and Women* centers on the human experience of linguistic oppression—how what we say reflects upon our social reality, and what that means for our personal identities.

Miller and Swift are sensitive observers of the world around them with a true gift for synthesizing what they see and hear. They employ a phenomenal range of source material—from dictionaries to TV kid shows—to plead the case for the active encouragement of language change. Their approach is warm, sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant; their expression is designed to capture the imagination, not to bicker over minute points in isolation from the whole fabric of human life.

This is not to say their work is in any way general or lacking in scientific method. Miller and Swift deeply examine the etymology of words and the progression of their meaning alongside of the progression of western culture. They also include a great deal of statistical information about how our thinking is shaped by our language.

If you're committed to feminism, you'll find *Words and Women* to be a valuable, concentrated review of the language struggle and its possible resolutions. If you're unsure about or opposed to the feminist aims in the area of language, read this book! You may be overwhelmed and want to throw it across the room, but this cogent statement will remain unscathed and calmly proceed with its essential human message when you pick it up again, and I dare say it will compell you to try again.

THOUGHTS AND TESTIMONIES

THE LAY WOMEN AND MEN OF THE FELLOWSHIP SPEAK OUT

The Gay Christian and the Church

by Denis Moore
Portland, Oregon



The Church occupies an ambiguous place in the lives of most gay people. In one sense, it plays little or no part at all. The sermons and hymns, cathedrals and confessions have lost their power to strike a sympathetic chord within. The political structure of the churches: patriarchal; the social milieu: heterosexual, the message: love for those who conform and condemnation for those who are different—these hardly speak to the gay situation.

I say the place of the Church is ambiguous for the homosexual person because, although its role is minimal in terms of influence, in a very real sense its gothic presence looms as a giant shadow across a wasteland of human suffering and agony. The struggle for personal identity in its early stages is often a struggle against the Church and its teachings. And the choice is to become a person—a self, unique, genuine, whole—or to capitulate to religious bigotry, vast social pressures, and internal anxiety at the cost of personal integrity. And so the war is waged, the Church in its anti-Christian ignominy assaulting, and the gay person defending her or his very humanity. Fortunately, thank God, the Church usually loses, and from the battle a scarred but real person begins to emerge.

So the absence of the Church in the practical affairs of the gay person is hardly negligible. It is a powerful negative force in many cases, often leaving wounds that will not heal, full of bitterness and anger.

There are, of course, the few who stay within the Church, sometimes managing a rigid celibacy, or, more usually, simply concealing one's sexual orientation from those who will not understand, imprisoned in the eternal closet.

Somehow the Church, like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, has lost its message of reconciliation in a maze of legalisms. Living grace has fallen victim to the death of the law, and the "Church" of Christ spews the poisonous venom which killed the Lord of Glory. Christ's teachings become a tool of antichrist when they are used—and they are used—to condemn those who are different, and to justify those who conform. The light of the Gospel becomes shrouded in ignorance and prejudice.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST,
WHICH THE CHURCH BY AND LARGE
NEITHER BELIEVES NOR PRACTICES,
IS THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY, RADICAL
MESSAGE IN HUMAN HISTORY.

But the God who uses the base things of the world to confound the wise has a way of circumventing the most ingenious human conspiracies. (The legalistic attitude of contemporary Christianity is a conspiracy that has no foundation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.) When God raises an issue, it emerges in such a way that it cannot be avoided. The movements for social justice and liberation are voices of conscience, addressed to the Spirit, and demanding a reshaping of values and the development of new attitudes of freedom, respect and reconciliation.

The gay issue is, I believe, being created not only out of human suffering and frustration, but also from spiritual need. The confrontation between the gay community and the established social structures is an indictment of a culture which condemns what it cannot understand. It is a call for "straight" society to rediscover its heart and to stretch its mind to conceive of feelings in themselves and in others which have been mercilessly repressed by severe sanctions against such feelings. The homosexual impulse is not just an as-

pect of the sex drive; it is a way of loving another human being. As such, it is a treasure in human experience to be thankful for.

With such an indictment against the Church as an institution, it seems almost a contradiction that gay people would be interested in relating to the Church in any way. However, there are those of us who believe that, whereas the institutional Church is incredibly backward and reactionary, the Gospel of Christ, which the Church by and large neither believes nor practices, is the most revolutionary, radical mes-

sage in human history. Just as the ideals which sparked the American revolution have become encrusted in an anti-revolutionary worship of the status quo, so the truth which sets people free has been subverted into a "gospel" of bondage, guilt and fear.

Around the world, churches and ministries are being born in oppression to call people to live in liberty, the liberty nurtured in self-respect as a response to God's love and healing grace, with an equal concern for the rights and needs of others. Gay Christians—yes, *gay* Christians!—are stepping out of their closets into their communities to witness to the power of God's love in Christ.

Until the Church repents of its oppression of gay people and other minorities and takes an active stand against all such oppression in all segments of society, most gay Christians will choose to remain outside of the institutional structures of the "straight" Church. To participate in such a wayward Church is to crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to open shame. The gay Christian knows that it was the religious establishment that crucified Christ, as it is still doing today.

The time has come to speak out! To call the Church to repentance! To cast out the demons of fear and indifference! The Church must once again be cleansed in the blood of the Lamb and renewed in the life of the Spirit. A Church in the grip of sin and self-righteousness can hardly speak peace to a world troubled with unrest and injustice.

And likewise, if the gay Christian is Christian in name only, if faith bears no harvest of good works, if we do not love one another as Christ has loved us, then we shall not see the day when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. A militant faith, full of compassion and understanding, will one day be victorious. Truth will slay the dragon of lies—if courage does not fail.



MOST CHURCHES believe homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian lifestyle, but the Rev. Lee Carlton and his congregation disagree. He is the new pastor of Jacksonville's Metropolitan Community Church, founded in 1968 to serve the city's population of homosexual Christians.



Rev. Lee Carlton

COMING IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF IN UNITY

The Rev. Lee J. Carlton has been a faithful minister of the Universal Fellowship almost from the beginning.

The founding pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Tampa, Florida, Rev. Carlton has since served as pastor of the Founding church of the Fellowship — MCC Los Angeles, California — and as Coordinator of World Church Extension first in Australia/ New Zealand, and most recently in the United Kingdom and in Western Europe.

Lee's most recent work for the Lord began when he accepted the call to the pastorate of MCC Jacksonville, Florida . . . right in the wake of "Hurricane Anita" Bryant and her anti-gay hysteria.

The Jacksonville *Times-Union and Journal* recently did a feature story on Rev. Carlton in their Religion section, and IN UNITY will share this information with its readers in the June issue.

PRESBYTERIANS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Continued from page 19

4. "We believe that Jesus Christ intends the ordination of his ministers to be a sign of hope for his church and his world. Therefore our present understanding of God's will for his people precludes the ordination" of self-affirming practicing homosexual persons.

The minority report agrees with several of the specific recommendations offered in the task force (majority) report, among which are widespread study, the decriminalization of private homosexual acts between consenting adults, and work for laws prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations. The minority asks that homosexual persons

be welcomed as seminary students but counseled as to ordination limitations, and suggests efforts to encourage homosexual persons toward reorientation or celibacy.

Five members of the 19-member task force signed the minority report.

(Copies of the full document, including background papers, the proposed policy statement, and the minority report, will be available soon. Costs are \$2 prepaid by third class mail, or \$3.75 prepaid by first class mail. Checks should be made payable to the Treasurer of the General Assembly; orders should be marked Blue Book I, Report on the Church and Homosexuality and sent to the Office of the General Assembly, 1201 Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027.)

THE FELLOWSHIP FAMILY



QUINCY, ILLINOIS

The MCC National Evangelistic Team seems to have found a second home in this spirit-filled congregation - in December, MCC Illiamo completed its fourth spiritual renewal service in thirteen months! Worship Coordinator Reid Christiansen conducted membership classes for the group, and at the conclusion of their latest spiritual renewal services, MCC Illiamo inducted its first 18 members. The congregation has also elected four persons to serve as a Board of Directors: Don Grotz, Mike Howard, Darlene Stallard, and Deane Zinn. The dedication and growth of MCC Illiamo is testimony that God is present and working in the lives of the people of the UFMCC.

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Rev. Art Skipper has been appointed Staff Chaplain at Sunland State Hospital, a training center for emotionally, physically, and mentally handicapped people. Rev. Skipper will be counseling at the hospital one day per week, and will conduct a regular MCC worship service one Sunday per month.

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Approximately 300 persons joined Pastor Randy Cypher and the congregation of MCC in the Valley for the dedication of their new building on January 20, 1978. Rev. Elder Troy Perry brought the message and presided over the dedication ceremony. Several elected officials joined the Valleyites on this special occasion, including State Senator Allan Robbins and other federal, state, and local representatives. A fellowship hour and reception concluded the morning's festivities.

CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT: Celebrants at concelebration; Attorney Al Gordon of the Parents of Gays organization reads from the Old Testament; State Senator Allan Robbins and Pastor Randall Cypher as Senator Robbins speaks of his support for human rights; Some of the delicious cakes provided by members of the congregation for the reception after worship; The Rev. Bob Arthur, Southwest District Coordinator, reading the Epistle; Some of the more than 350 persons present for the dedication service; The Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, founder of the Universal Fellowship, dedicates the new church building to the Glory of God. Photo Montage by Peter, photographer



BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Members of Alpha and Omega MCC in Brooklyn have begun "Operation Chartered Church", as their major goal for this year. At a special congregational meeting, members unanimously agreed that if the church is to provide a better spiritual home for its people, a full-time minister is a necessity. The congregation further decided to seek chartering by the UFMCC. A church committee has been organized to study and make suggestions regarding the fulfillment of this goal.

Rev. Dee Jackson and Bill Smith were awarded certificates of recognition for their work with prisoners by the New York City Department of Corrections in its Chaplain's Associate Program for 1977.

BOULDER, COLORADO

MCC Boulder celebrated its first anniversary on February 19, 1978, with a worship service, and a congregational Pot Luck Dinner. MCC Boulder has experienced many of God's blessings throughout its first year, as its people struggle to realize God's will for them in their lives.

SAN BERNADINO, CALIFORNIA

The new year will be an exciting one for the congregation of Trinity MCC, which is beginning a series of new outreach programs. A Gay Women's Rap has been initiated to serve the combined area of San Bernadino/Riverside, and is coordinated by Janice Arnold. A similar program, Gay Men's Rap has also begun, under the direction of Harold Steiker. Both programs hope to grow through the ideas and energies of the participants. To make things easier for gays with children, volunteer babysitters are provided during the meetings.

H.U.H.Y. (Help Us Help You) is another program of Trinity MCC. This organization was founded on the realization that it takes money to initiate change, and will serve as a fundraising group to further the work toward gay human rights.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

For Pastor Ron Pannell and the congregation of MCC New Orleans, this is an exciting time of new outreach programs and new faces. Rev. Pannell has invited Ms. Mary Morris to join the pastoral staff of their church. Mary began her work with MCC at the New Orleans church in 1972, and will be returning to that city, with her lover, from their present church home, MCC Sacramento, California.

Rev. Pannell and the people of MCC New Orleans have begun a special ministry at the Club Baths on Toulouse St. in the French Quarter. Rev. Pannell will sit in the reading room of the baths on the second Tuesday of each month, from 7-10 PM, available to anyone who wishes to come and talk with him. About this new outreach, Rev. Pannell commented: "It's another way of bringing the ministry to the people, instead of waiting for the people to come to the church for help."

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Hartford MCC Pastor Jay Deacon has been chosen to respond to a televised attack by Anita Bryant on gay people and their civil rights, and Hartford's "Faith Broadcasting Network" has promised to broadcast it. The attack was aired in February, 1977 on the "PTL CLUB". On Feb. 22, 1977, Rev. Deacon filed a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission Fairness Branch requesting equal air time to respond. Faith Network's president promised to grant equal time for the rebuttal, but this promise was never fulfilled. After local newspapers printed front page articles regarding this matter, Faith Center in Glendale, California called Rev. Deacon to arrange the response.

MCC Hartford has arranged to sponsor the premier performance of the popular Broadway comedy, *The Ritz*, on March 15, 1978. This program is a presentation of The Producing Guild, and is the largest fundraising effort in the church's history.

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

Worship Coordinator Bob Freeman-Jones and the congregation of MCC Syracuse celebrated the first anniversary of the church on Dec. 3, 1977. The evening included a congregational spaghetti dinner and a festive worship service. A high point of the service was a dance by the Plus Six Fresh Fish Dance Group of the Gay Community Ministries. Rev. Marge Ragona, Pastor of MCC Providence, RI, was the guest preacher and celebrant on this memorable occasion.



NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

MCC Tidewater, a study group of the UFMCC, is operating a flourishing, non-profit book service to gay people in the Tidewater area. Supplied principally through the Lambda Rising Book Store in Washington, and the Oscar Wilde Memorial Book Shop in New York City, quality books on the gay theme may be purchased at the church's book table at the coffee hour following worship, or ordered from the above-mentioned shops. This service provides the only

positive book store for gays in the state of Virginia. The MCC group has also begun staffing information tables in the local bars, as well as speaking at colleges through its campus ministry outreach. The Rev. Roy Birchard and the congregation of MCC Tidewater anticipate a very productive and meaningful year as reach out to God's children in the months to come.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

The MCC family is increasing in the Mid-Central District of the Fellowship! Under the dynamic leadership of Rev. Brenda Cisneros-Hunt, a worshipping congregation averaging 33 in attendance has been gathered in the city of St. Paul, Minnesota. Not yet a Study Group, these brothers and sisters hope to be granted official status by their district in time to receive members at their Easter Sunday service.

Though small and new, this group was able to send their Worship Coordinator, Rev. Cisneros-Hunt, to Ministers' Conference in Portland, Oregon, this past January, and they plan to host a visit by Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson for a workshop weekend in late spring.

Regular worship services are held each Sunday morning at 10:30 AM, and the group meets mid-week, on Wednesday evenings, for Bible study. Many needed articles — from a piano to a "whole load of office furniture" — have been donated by the worshippers for the congregation's work in the St. Paul community, and the group has had active media involvement with radio and television stations, and with the newspapers, because of the human rights controversy recently stirred up by such notables as Anita Bryant and her ilk.

Mid-western snowstorms bring opportunities for fun and recreation, (snow tubing?), and sore muscles from digging out, but this ambitious group — despite the snow — is already making plans to be well represented at the 10th anniversary General Conference of the church in Los Angeles in 1979! More power to them!

FELLOWSHIP FAMILY COVERAGE

We, in the Publications Department of the Universal Fellowship Press, would like to cover *every* congregation of the Fellowship in *every* issue of IN UNITY. This, unfortunately, is not possible for two reasons.



LEFT: MCC St. Paul treasurer, Anita Guenther, and worshippers after Ash Wednesday services.

BELOW: Members of the St. Paul group: (L - R) Daryl; Dan; Debbie; Rita; Arthur; and Don. Rita Cisneros-Hunt is the worship coordinator's "Beloved spouse." The photo was taken on "piano-moving day."

BELOW: Rev. Brenda "Frosty the Snowperson" Cisneros-Hunt in the process of shoveling her way to church!



and let us know about it. If necessary, we'll "follow up" by telephone for more details.

Here are some hints as to what we look for in Fellowship Family material:

- Something interesting and/or significant in the life of a congregation: Pot Luck suppers and bake sales don't "make it." Installation of a pastor; a new church building; local media coverage; spiritual renewals; etc., all make useable material.

- Whenever possible, send *photos*: any clear photo will do, even "snapshots." We give preference to photo stories.

- Always give us the telephone number of a local contact person in the event we need to call for more details.

- *People* make stories: let us know how your people feel and respond to events in your congregational life!

Let's hear from *all* of our churches in the months ahead!

First, we have severe space limitations. Second, we can only *print* what we *receive*; if something significant happens in your congregation, and you would like to see it covered in IN UNITY, you must take the initiative

MINISTERIAL CHANGES (To March 31, 1978)

Ackerman, the Rev. Arlene: From staff, MCC Stockton, CA to staff, MCC Portland, OR.

Anderson, the Rev. Sky: from co-pastor, MCC Detroit, MI to minister-in-residence, Los Angeles, CA and Samaritan Theological Institute.

Ayers, the Rev. John: from minister-in-residence, Christchurch, MCC Miami, FL to interim pastor, MCC Sarasota, FL (temporary assignment).

von Buhler, the Rev. Jose: newly-licensed; continues duties as worship coordinator of MCC Thames Valley in the United Kingdom, and as Church Extension Officer for England and Western Europe.

Carden, the Rev. David: from minister-in-residence, MCC Jacksonville, FL to New Freedom Evangelistic Team, (formerly National Evangelistic Team).

Daniel, the Rev. Bonnie: from unassigned to staff, MCC Pomona Valley, CA.

Davenport, the Rev. Judy: from worship coordinator, MCC San Antonio, TX to pastor, Christ the King MCC, Oklahoma City, OK.

Davis, the Rev. Keith: available for call.

Eastmen, the Rev. Donald: from staff, MCC Des Moines, IA to pastor, MCC Dallas, TX.

Fleschner, the Rev. Arthur: from staff, MCC Tampa, FL to interim pastor, King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL.

Gunton, the Rev. David: from interim pastor, MCC Toronto, Ontario, Canada, to worship coordinator, MCC Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Harris, the Rev. Jacqueline: resigned from ministry.

Harris, the Rev. James: from pastor, MCC St. Louis, MO to: available for call.

Harvey, the Rev. Jeri Ann: available for call (effective May 1st).

Hill, the Rev. James: from worship coordinator Columbia/Augusta congregations to minister-in-residence, MCC Chicago, IL.

James, the Rev. Sherrie: from associate pastor, MCC St. Louis, MO to: unassigned.

Lindstrom, the Rev. Karen: from minister-in-residence, MCC Denver, CO to staff, MCC Melbourne, NSW, Australia.

Mickley, the Rev. Richard: from Director of Publications, Fellowship Headquarters; continues duties as assistant pastor, MCC Pomona Valley, CA.

McVey-Abbott, the Rev. Jo: Newly-licensed; continues duties as worship coordinator of MCC Birmingham, England, and as Church Extension Secre-

tary for the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

Miller, the Rev. Robert: resigned from ministry.

Murr, the Rev. Frank: from assistant pastor, MCC Denver, CO to staff, MCC Washington, D.C. (Effective May 1978).

Naisbett, the Rev. Candace: from unassigned to Associate pastor, MCC Omaha, NB.

Pederson, the Rev. Donald: from pastor, MCC Los Angeles, CA to: unassigned.

Perry, the Rev. Troy: to interim pastor, MCC Los Angeles, CA (temporary position); continues duties as Moderator of the Board of Elders.

Ramirez, the Rev. Arthur: from pastor, MCC Wichita, KS to staff, MCC Thames Valley, United Kingdom.

Stewart, the Rev. Weldon: resigned from ministry.

St. Ives, the Rev. Evan: from pastor, MCC Sarasota, FL to: unassigned.

Taylor, the Rev. Kenneth: from pastor, MCC London, England to worship coordinator, MCC Greensboro, NC.

Taylor, the Rev. William: from worship coordinator, MCC Greensboro, NC to worship coordinator, MCC Albuquerque, NM.

Twar, the Rev. Robert: from staff, MCC in the Valley, North Hollywood, CA to pastor, MCC Wichita, KS.

Weymouth, the Rev. Jan: from pastor, MCC Brisbane, QLD, Australia to staff, MCC Melbourne, VICT, Australia.

Ministers Available for Call

The Rev. Buff Fisher: c/o Post Office Box 27628, Tucson, Arizona 85726.

The Rev. Valerie Bouchard: c/o Post Office Box 2392, Chicago, Illinois, 60690.

The Rev. Michael England: c/o 945 "G" St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.

The Rev. John Ayres: c/o Post Office Box 818, Sarasota, Florida 33578.

The Rev. Jim Beers: 10 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, New Jersey 07712.

The Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey: c/o Post Office Box 13731, Houston, Texas 77019 (As of May 1, 1978).

The Rev. Jerry Sloan: 6419 East 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64126.

The Rev. Kris Dodds: c/o Post Office Box 1002, Upland, California 91786.

Postscript!

Sunday, February 5, 1978, was Evangelism Sunday throughout the Universal Fellowship. Did your congregation receive and send in its Evangelism Sunday offering for World Church Extension? Can you make a personal love offering for this needed work? Every dollar helps! Donations should be sent to: World Church Extension, Post Office Box 5570, Los Angeles, CA 90055.

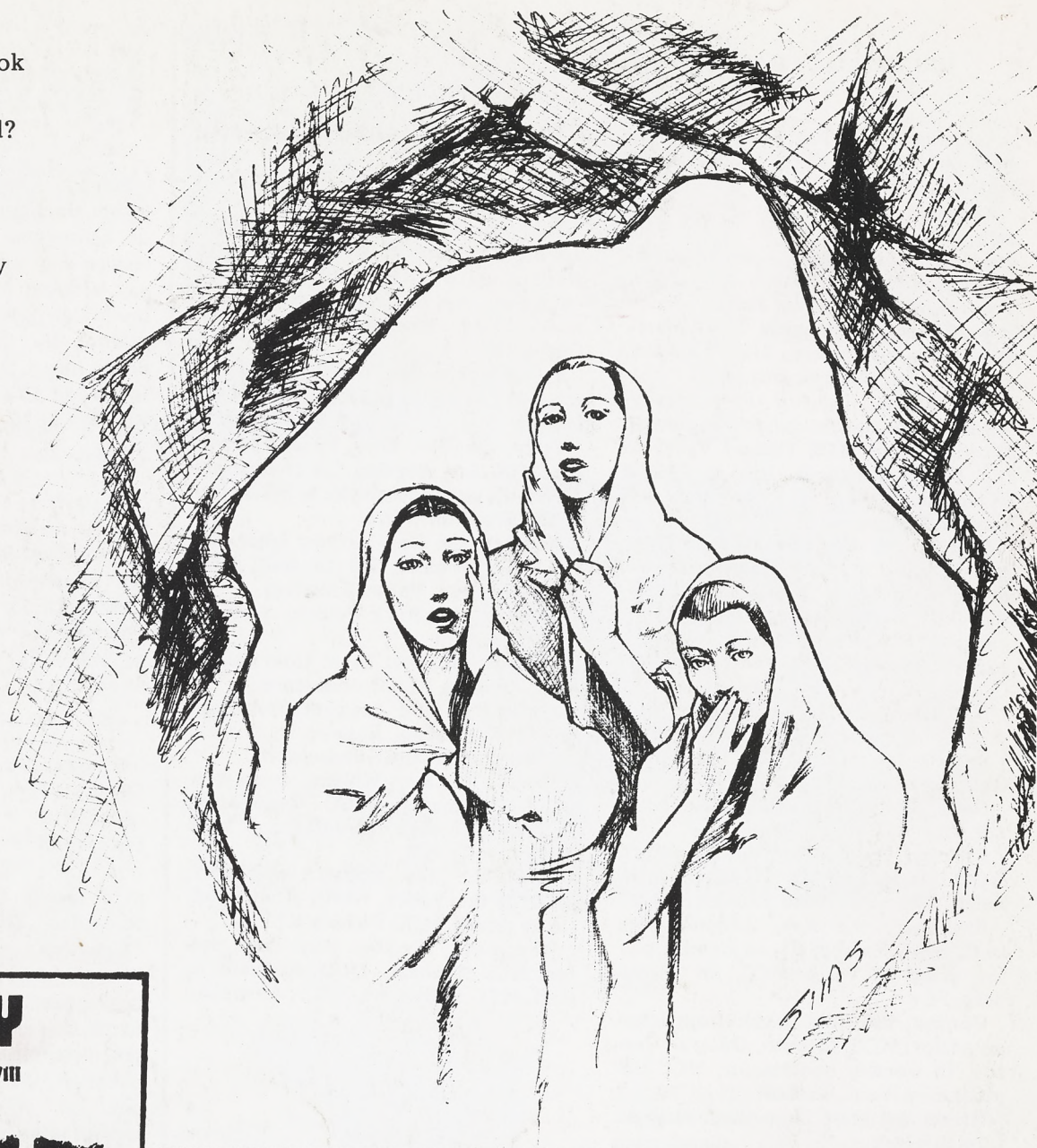
In letters and telephone conversations received at Fellowship headquarters we've learned that many of our churches had exceptionally good attendance for Easter Sunday services! For this we thank God. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every Sunday could be an "Easter" Sunday in MCC?

Sunday, May 7, 1978, is Samaritan Sunday. The General Conference has asked that — just as in the case of Evangelism Sunday — each congregation of the Fellowship receive and send in a special offering to help support Samaritan Theological Institute, the Fellowship's official training institute. The churches have been very generous in the past, but still, there seems never to be enough money available for the school to begin to truly realize its full potential. We know it sounds familiar, but, can you help with a personal love offering in this need? Who knows, the dollar which you send in today may be the one dollar which is needed to help your future pastor finish his or her education! God truly does work in mysterious ways! Donations may be sent to Treasurer, UFMCC, Post Office Box 5570, Los Angeles, CA 90055. You should indicate that the gift is for STI on your cheque of money order.

IN UNITY received two letters from MCC congregations chastising the magazine for not including coverage of their activities in the Fellowship Family section. While we admit that God is moving in the world today, the Almighty has not endowed the Editor of IN UNITY with the gift of prophetic insight. We can only print what the congregations send us by way of news!

"Why do you look
for the Living
among the dead?
He is not here.
He is risen!"

Luke 24:5 — ASV



IN UNITY

GENERAL CONFERENCE VIII
DENVER, COLORADO — AUGUST 1 — 7, 1977

Believe in the Lord, always, until
I say, Beloved Let us people have
any fellowship. The Lord is at
hand Finally, my Beloved
and Sisters, whatever is true, what-
ever is honorable, whatever is just,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,
whatever is gracious, if there is any
knowledge, if there is anything
worthy of praise ...



Think On These Things.

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